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THE NEW ARCTIC FRONTIER

As the ice melts, US increases security response with better naval technology, more cold-weather training over recent months **Page 4**

U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Wells pulls himself out from the Arctic Ocean during ice rescue training about 715 miles north of Barrow, Alaska, on Oct. 3.

NYXOLYNO CANGEMI
Courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard

Navy searching for USS Antietam advancement exams lost in mail

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The advancement exams for sailors aboard the USS Antietam appear to be lost in the mail.

The command of the cruiser, which is homeported at Yokosuka, Japan, is searching for the exams that were on their way to a Florida processing center.

Capt. George Kessler first informed the crew of the status of the missing exams on Wednesday via a post to the Antietam's official Facebook page.

"We verified receipt of our exams at the ship's commander wrote. "The next location in the postal chain is Osan Air Mobility Command."

In an updated statement provided

Thursday by Task Force 70, Kessler said the exams had been tracked to a flight departing Nov. 13 from Osan AMC Terminal to Yokota Air Base in Tokyo before being delivered to FMC Yokohama.

"The office was closed in Yokohama last night and we are working to get their information as soon as the office reopens," Kessler wrote.

Kessler said there are two courses of action moving forward.

In the first, the exams make their way through the postal system and are eventually delivered to their destination, Naval Education and Training Professional Development Center in Pensacola, Fla., where they will be graded.

SEE EXAMS ON PAGE 3

MILITARY

Troops celebrate Thanksgiving away from home

In Germany, US cooks offer soldiers a feast for holiday

By WILL MORRIS
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — For the cooks at the Clock Tower Cafe on Kieber Kaserne, Thanksgiving Day is game day, a day they bring all their skills to bear and lays out a feast designed to accomplish one mission: Make troops forget for a moment that they aren't home.

It's also a chance to show off a little and, despite the work involved in pulling it off, Army cooks look forward to it all year, said Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Morris, who leads the DFAC — or Dining Facility. "This is a reward for us; it's a time to showcase our talent as culinary specialists and give back to the community," Morris said. "We like to showcase a meal for some of them who are not at home, away from family and miss family and friends."

The entire operation, complete with multiple ice sculptures and two ceremonial cakes, took about three months to plan and three days for the soldiers and civilian staff of the DFAC to prepare. The feast laid out was, as is tradition, indulgent enough to seriously impress.

All the suspects and a few surprises were present — a massive broiled leg of beef, prime rib, baked ham, pork hocks, baked stuffed fish, fried shrimp, corn on the cob, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, Lyonnaise carrots, mac and cheese, dressing, corn bread, green bean casserole, rolls, a desert tray that would send anyone into a diabetic coma and a complete salad bar. Oh, and turkey, lots and lots of turkey.

As is tradition, officers and staff NCOs in their dress uniforms served the food.

Two soldiers from the base said they were grateful for all the effort.

"I think it's pretty dope that they took their time and put it together," said Pvt. Tawre Watson, of the 635th Movement Control Team. "I think this is really good for first-timers in Germany to help them being here."

Unaccompanied soldiers weren't the only ones in attendance at the dinner. A large number of Germans were present, and numerous Army families



PHOTOS BY WILL MORRIS/Stars and Stripes

Top: An Army Chaplain decides what to eat on Thanksgiving Day in the serving line of the Clock Tower Cafe at Kieber Kaserne in Germany.

Above: Army Sgt. Laval Roberts, of the 624th Movement Control Team, and Pvt. Tawre Watson, of the 635th Movement Control Team, eat dinner together at the cafe.

who opted to let the DFAC do the Thanksgiving work for them were there as well.

Sgt. 1st Class Stephane Salvane and his wife, Master Sgt. Karie Salvane, served troops on the line but took the time out to eat with their infant daughter and son.

Nigel, 7, had already taken liking to Army food. He said he liked the DFAC Thanksgiving Dinner better than at home. "Well, we're a family, so we have to be honest," he said.

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Serving those who serve is a far-reaching military task

By PAUL SONNE
The Washington Post

Thousands of U.S. troops are spending Thanksgiving deployed to the American border with Mexico, joining fellow service members overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq who are marking the holiday away from loved ones — a familiar fact of life for those who serve.

The Pentagon shipped out more than 300,000 pounds of traditional Thanksgiving food, including 9,738 whole turkeys, to those stationed and deployed around the globe. A total of 799 pounds of turkey went to troops serving on the border in southern Texas.

Like many of the Pentagon's initiatives, the Thanksgiving roll-out was an affair of a giant scale: 51,234 pounds of roasted turkey, 16,284 pounds of sweet potatoes, 81,360 pies, 19,284 cakes and 7,836 gallons of eggnog. Forces around the world received the goods through the vast military supply chain that keeps those serving in combat equipped with everything from medicine to food.

"Many of America's military men and women are away from home this Thanksgiving, making sacrifices to secure our freedom and to protect our southern border," Army Brig. Gen. Mark Simerly, the commander of troop support for the Defense Logistics Agency, said in a statement. He said the military was providing them "the very best Thanksgiving

meal our country has to offer."

A spokeswoman for U.S. Army North, which oversees the Army part of the deployment, said that Thursday would be a "light duty day" for troops deployed along the border, meaning they would be asked to do little, if any, work. No troops had been sent home to their regular duty stations or moved among the border mission sites, she said Wednesday.

Many bases host traditional Thanksgiving meals in their dining halls. Those deployed farther afield often find more creative ways to celebrate, whether that means frying a turkey on a combat outpost in Afghanistan or eating Thanksgiving dinner on a submarine.

A select few usually get treated to meals with senior leaders, who often visit the troops on Thanksgiving and Christmas as a show of thanks for their sacrifice. George W. Bush famously flew into Iraq under the cover of night to mark Thanksgiving with the troops in 2003, months after the invasion.

The tradition of making sure forces deployed over the Thanksgiving holiday receive their turkey dates back decades. The Pentagon supplied turkey and cranberry sauce to troops serving overseas during World War II. The tradition followed in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Some of the troops deployed to the border in Texas will mark Thanksgiving in place with the turkey sent over by the Pentagon.

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MILITARY



SARAH MYERS/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Sailors assigned to the USS Antietam stand in an honor line during a sea and anchor detail. Advancement exams taken by crewmembers on the Antietam have apparently been lost in the mail.

Exams: Training center using registered mail numbers to track missing exams

FROM FRONT PAGE

If they are not found, sailors will take the "Spring Advancement Exam as a late exam," Kessler wrote.

"Our desire is to ensure you have every opportunity to advance on this exam cycle and in the future," he said in the statement.

According to the statement, the Florida training center is tracking the exams using registered mail numbers.

The Navy advancement exam consists of 175 questions, with 150 of them related to the exam-taker's rating and another 25 about professional military knowledge.

This isn't the first time the exams have been lost in the mail.

In 2006, 251 Naples-based third-class petty officers were informed that they'd have to retake their exams after their first answer sheets were lost in the mail.

"I can only tell you personally that I'm sorry, and we as a sys-

tem failed you and we need to assume accountability for that," Command Master Chief Gustavo Beltra told a gathering of affected sailors in the wake of that loss.

Beltra said that identity theft was a concern because the lost exams contained personal information, such as Social Security numbers. He advised sailors to monitor credit reports and report suspicious activity.

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SEAL faces 7 charges in Iraq case

By Andrew Dyer

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — Evidence was presented in a San Diego military courtroom Tuesday to determine whether a Navy SEAL platoon commander will be tried on charges that he failed to act when made aware of atrocities allegedly committed by another SEAL during a 2017 deployment in Iraq.

Lt. Jacob Xavier Portier faces seven charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman and dereliction of duty.

Military prosecutors allege Portier knew about the actions of Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher, who is accused of killing a wounded teenage Islamic State combatant in Mosul. In the hours after the killing, Portier contacted a re-enlistment ceremony for Gallagher next to the teenager's corpse.

Portier then, according to the prosecution, ordered his platoon to take a group photo next to the dead prisoner.

Prosecutors said that although Portier was not present during the killing, he was made aware of it by other SEALs.

The defense argued that Portier reported Gallagher as soon as the lieutenant found out about the incidents.

Marine Capt. Connor McMahon argued the government's position in front of Navy Cmdr. Phil Hamon, who presided over the Article 32 hearing at Naval Base San Diego.

"This case is about a Navy lieutenant who didn't possess the moral courage to do the right thing," McMahon said in his closing comments. "Lt. Portier didn't take out a hunting knife and stab a prisoner in the neck. He didn't get behind a sniper rifle and shoot at a little girl trying to escape from ISIS, and he didn't shoot an old man taking water jugs to the river. But he knew about it — and he did nothing."

Hamon will make a report to military authorities, who will determine whether Portier will stand trial.

Navy judge advocates said that decision was expected by early December.

Prosecutors allege that other, unnamed members of the platoon came to Portier throughout the deployment with concerns about Gallagher's conduct in the field, including shooting at least two noncombatant civilians.

After the platoon returned to San Diego, some of its members continued to lobby Portier to hold Gallagher accountable for his actions, prosecutors said.

"It got so bad that by February or March 2018, (the two SEALs) were so frustrated that they went to Lt. Portier and told him if an investigation wasn't launched, they were going directly to NCIS, the Commodore or Fox News," McMahon said. "It's not a case about any minor misconduct by the enlisted sailors in the platoon or any perceived guilt by association. This is about Chief Gallagher killing civilians indiscriminately and the chain of command that did nothing about it."

Prosecutors also allege Portier made false statements when questioned about Gallagher's actions by his commanders.

Attorney Jeremiah Sullivan, who represents Portier, said there are conflicting accounts from members of the platoon, and that instead of reporting the incidents to him, the SEALs actually kept information from Portier. Once he found out, he did report Gallagher to his chain of command. Sullivan is asking for a speedy trial for Portier, saying the prosecutions case is weak.

Trump war zone visit is in works

By Zeke Miller
and Jill Colvin
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump frequently credits himself with accomplishing more for the military and veterans than any other president in recent memory. But he has yet to embark on what has long been a traditional presidential pilgrimage important to the military: a visit to troops deployed in a war zone.

As he departed Tuesday for Florida to spend the Thanksgiving holiday at his private club in Palm Beach, Trump said he'd soon correct the oversight.

"I'm going to a war zone," he said in response to a reporter's question about his support for the troops. He did not say when he would be making the trip or where he would be going. An official said a White House team recently returned from beginning to plan for a visit.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Wednesday that visiting a war zone is a decision for the president, while adding that there have been times in the past when he has advised against visits to "certain locations" to avoid security risks to the president and the troops.

"There's places that I've been very straightforward I don't want him to go at certain times," Mattis said. He declined to elaborate.

On Thursday, Trump delivered a Thanksgiving message to troops around the world, telling them by telephone, "Your courage truly inspires us."

Trump told members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and U.S. Coast Guard that he and first lady Melania Trump wanted to express their "profound gratitude."

The omission of a trip down-range is one of a long list of norm-breaking moves that underscore the president's increasingly fraught relationship with the military, which has celebrated Trump's investments in defense spending but cringed at what some see as efforts to politicize their service.

Just this week, Trump leveled criticism against the storied command of the 2011 mission that killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, retired Adm. William McRaven. "Wouldn't it have been nice if we got Osama bin Laden a lot sooner than that, wouldn't it have been nice," Trump said.

The latest controversy followed a pattern of concerns raised by former senior military officers about Trump's grasp of the military's role, and it comes as White House aides and defense officials have raised alarm about what they view as the president's disinterest in briefings about troop deployments overseas.

Shortly after taking office, Trump appeared to try to deflect

responsibility for the death of a servicemember, William "Ryan" Owens, in a failed operation in Yemen, saying planning for the mission began under his predecessor and was backed by senior military commanders.

"They explained what they wanted to do, the generals, who are very respected," he told "Fox & Friends" at the time. "And they lost Ryan."

Trump won the White House on a platform of ending U.S. military commitments abroad, but he's been bedeviled by many of the same challenges as his predecessors. More American troops are now deployed in conflict zones than when he took office.

Aides have suggested that Trump is wary of traveling to conflict zones where he doesn't fully support the mission. Trump begrudgingly backed a surge of troops in Afghanistan last year and boosted U.S. deployments in Iraq, Syria and Africa to counter Islamic State and other extremist groups.

Trump said last week in a "Fox News Sunday" interview that he was "very much opposed to the war in Iraq. I think it was a tremendous mistake, should have never happened." Trump, in fact, offered lukewarm support for the invasion at the time but began offering public doubts about the mission after the conflict began in March 2003.

At home, some assert that Trump's decision to send thousands of active-duty troops to the U.S.-Mexico border shortly before the Nov. 6 midterm elections was a political stunt.

Trump also drew criticism for his decision not to visit Arlington National Cemetery to mark Veterans Day, following his trip to Europe. He said later he "should have" visited the cemetery but was too busy with official business. His public schedule that day listed no events.

In the "Fox News Sunday" interview, Trump was asked why he hadn't visited the troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan in the two years he's served as commander in chief.

"Well, I think you will see that happen," he said. "There are things that are planned."

He also touted his support for the men and women in uniform.

"I don't think anybody's been more with the military than I have, as a president," Trump said. "In terms of funding, in terms of all of the things I've been able to get them, including the vets, I don't think anybody's done more than me."

Trump received five draft deferments during the Vietnam War, four for education and one for a diagnosis of bone spurs — though he later told The New York Times he could not remember which foot was affected by the malady or how long it lasted.

MILITARY

Melting ice in Arctic has US military looking north

By DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

ANALASKA, Alaska
Army helicopters began flying in and out of the scraggly wilderness near this fishing town in August, surprising even the mayor.

The tan, twin-rotor Chinook aircraft thumped over treeless cliffs and the historic port of Dutch Harbor, parking at a mountainside airstrip too small to land jet airliners.

Soldiers came and went, sometimes staying in the main hotel in town, across the street from a bar called the Norwegian Rat Saloon. Unalaska's mayor, Frank Kelty, said he called the military to find out what was going on but learned little.

"We have these Army helicopters here, and we don't know what they're doing or where they're going," he said after driving by the airport on the remote Aleutian island and seeing a Chinook resting near the runway.

The mysterious operation was part of the U.S. military's gradual growth in the Arctic as it grapples with the effects of melting polar ice and Russia's and China's increasing assertiveness in the region. The slowly evolving plan has included stationing more fighter jets in Alaska, expanding partnerships with Nordic militaries, increasing cold weather training and designing a new class of ice-breaker ship for the Coast Guard that could be armed.

The vision could take greater shape by the end of the year. Both the Navy and Coast Guard are working on new Arctic strategies in light of the quickly changing circumstances senior U.S. military officials see.

In October, the USS Harry S.

Truman aircraft carrier and its associated ships sailed above the Arctic Circle, the first such unit to do so since the Cold War. The strike group, carrying thousands of sailors, practiced cold weather operations in the Norwegian Sea, an area where Russian submarines operate.

"Certainly America has got to up its game in the Arctic. There's no doubt about that," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said during a visit to Alaska in June. "The reality is that we're going to have to deal with the developing Arctic, and it is developing."

Recent upgrades include new sensors on several Aleutian islands for a radar network known as the North Warning System. It was first installed during the Cold War to watch for incoming aircraft and ballistic missiles, but the Pentagon concluded more recently that existing radar did not offer "adequate detection and identification of aircraft operating outside the continental United States," according to an Air Force assessment.

That prompted the operation involving the helicopters in Unalaska.

A military spokeswoman, Leah Garton, said the mission allowed the aircrews to practice navigating over water and landing in mountainous areas, where the sensors were installed. The new equipment will "assist in flight safety for all civilian and military aircraft in the local area," she said.

The new Navy and Coast Guard Arctic strategies would follow the national defense strategy released by Mattis in January that made countering Russia and China a priority. Both nations have shown interest in Arctic resources as the ice melts, including fossil fuels, diamonds and metals like nickel

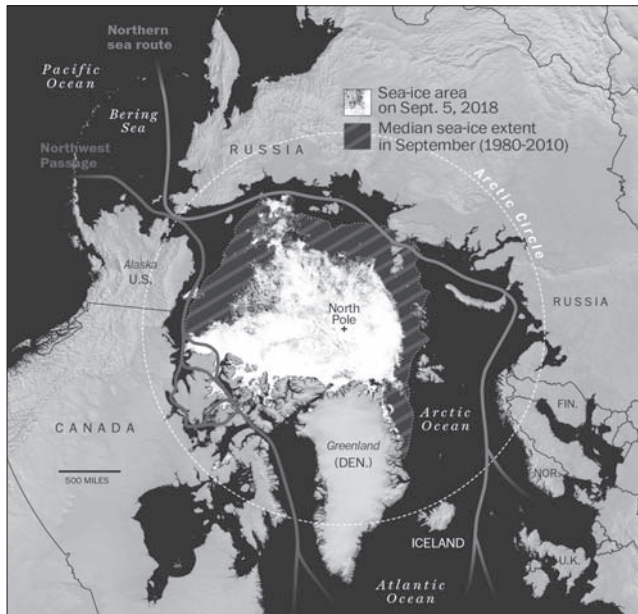
and platinum.

Russia has more than 40 icebreakers — the U.S. military has two working ones — and stationed more troops in the region. China, meanwhile, is building its third polar icebreaker and staked



An F/A-18E lands on the USS Harry S. Truman near Norway.

MAXWELL HIGGINS
Courtesy of the U.S. Navy



LARIS KARKKIS, THE WASHINGTON POST/SOURCES: Institute of Environmental Physics/University of Bremen

a claim this year as a "near-Arctic" state, further injecting itself into policy debates.

"We're obviously watching both the Russians and the Chinese quite closely," said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, who oversees Coast Guard operations in the Arctic and Pacific. "Russia, on their side of the Arctic in sort of the Northern Sea Route, is investing heavily in commercial infrastructure and in military infrastructure."

Coast Guard Capt. Gregory Tlapa, who commands the lone U.S. military icebreaker traveling to the Arctic each year, said waters like the Bering Strait are not yet busy with ships, especially compared with other maritime corridors. Waters are warming, he said, but "somewhat warmer still means mostly frozen."

But the lack of U.S. military vessels and infrastructure in the Arctic could be problematic, said Tlapa, speaking on the red-hulled USCGC Healy while it refueled in Dutch Harbor in August. Congress recently approved initial funding for six new polar icebreakers, but they are probably years away from deploying.

"It's that school of international realism: If you're not here, someone else will be," Tlapa said. "The nation doesn't have a deep-bench

strength in terms of capabilities to operate up here and project power and protect our national interests."

The potential militarization has raised hope for investment in places like Unalaska and Nome, a port town on Alaska's western coast.

Unalaska, with nearly 5,000 full-time residents, is perhaps best known as the port in Discovery Channel's "Deadliest Catch" series. The town processes the largest volume of commercial fishing in the United States yearly, with the company UniSea operating hotels, bunkhouses and bars there.

The fishing helps make Unalaska home to hundreds of bald eagles, which scavenge dumpsters, perch on lamp posts and occasionally swoop down to attack people.

The town — which takes its name from the Aleut word "Ounalashka," meaning "near the peninsula" — has struggled with unemployment, alcoholism and bar fights. But Kelty said that has improved in recent years as the number of full-time residents increases and the success of the fishing industry has helped bankrupt paved roads, schools and other municipal projects.

SEE ARCTIC ON PAGE 5



NYXOLNO CANGEMI/Courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard

Scientists, engineers and crewmembers from the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy prepare to unload gear on Oct. 2 about 715 miles north of Barrow, Alaska, in the Arctic.

MILITARY



RAYMOND MADDOCKS/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman, left, and fast combat support ship USNS Arctic conduct an underway replenishment.

Arctic: Pentagon expanding training with partner nations in thawing Arctic

FROM PAGE 4

Echoes of World War II are still obvious across Unalaska. The hull of the SS Northwestern, a ship bombed during a Japanese air raid in 1942, rests upended in a bay, and many World War II-era buildings have been repurposed by the fishing industry. The ruins of an old Army installation, Fort Mears, overlook Dutch Harbor.

Though nothing is planned, Kelly argued that an influx of U.S. troops could bring infrastructure projects that could benefit residents, such as the installation of undersea fiber-optic cables from mainland Alaska that could bring more affordable internet and cellphone service.

In Nome, the Army Corps of Engineers is studying whether the small city's port can be dug deeper to handle large vessels. Doing so would add another deep-water port on the Bering Sea, 730 miles closer to the Arctic Circle than Unalaska. Both towns are below the circle but are considered a part of the Arctic by the

U.S. government because of how connected they are to it.

Despite its distance from the Arctic, Unalaska is the last deep-water port where large ships heading to the Arctic can refuel in the western United States, and the first when returning. However, it is not considered ideal by mariners and pilots because of its limitations, which include no highway connecting it to mainland Alaska, limited communications and wild weather in which thick fog and high winds are common and can maroon visitors for days.

Elsewhere in the Arctic, the Pentagon has begun to expand its presence through training exercises with partner nations. In Europe, the Marine Corps is deepening relationships with Norway, Finland and Sweden, training units of rank-and-file troops in the shadow of Russia. In June, Norway's government asked the United States to increase the number of Marines there from about 330 to 700, with plans to base them on a rotational basis in the Norwegian Arctic.

Russia vaguely warned Norway that there will be "consequences" to the decision, and U.S. and Norwegian officials have sought to stress that the arrangement is meant to deepen their security partnership and build expertise on existing Arctic training ranges rather than deter Russian aggression.

Col. John Carroll, the deputy commander of Marine Corps Forces Europe, said commanders want to make sure servicemembers are familiar with the biting cold and can move through the countryside on skis or snowshoes.

"Everything is hard. Everything is more difficult," Carroll said. "When the wind is blowing at freakin' 30 miles per hour, it's dark 24-7, and it's minus-20 degrees Fahrenheit, and you've got to put your gear in your pack, get out of your rack, get out of your sleeping bag, get outside the tent and go do something — everything is hard."

The Air Force also has sought to strengthen its relationships with

Arctic allies, said Iris Ferguson, a civilian analyst for the service. That includes the formation of the Arctic Challenge exercise over Europe that will probably test air-to-air combat and other skills and involve Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the U.S. at some point in the future.

The Air Force is planning to base two squadrons of advanced F-35A fighters in Alaska by 2022, supplementing a fleet of jets that already includes two squadrons of F-22 Raptors, considered the Pentagon's best in air-to-air combat. The decision will allow the Air Force to take advantage of the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex, a sprawling installation that includes 65,000 square miles of space for pilots to train.

"Air power, in particular, plays such a crucial role in this region," Ferguson said. "The ice is melting, absolutely, but the reality is that it's incredibly difficult to operate from a surface perspective, either on ocean or on land."

The Army and Marine Corps increasingly have trained ground forces in Alaska. In March, a joint force of about 1,500 U.S. troops trained together in an exercise known as Arctic Edge, with some driving armored vehicles across frosty terrain and others moving on foot through frigid, snowy conditions.

The elevated profile of Arctic operations at the center has raised the possibility that the Army will replace a tracked personnel carrier known as the small-unit sustainment vehicle, or SUSV. The vehicle, first fielded in the 1980s, rides high on snow and sometimes tows a squad of soldiers on skis behind it, said Jared Sapp, a science adviser to U.S. Army Alaska.

At sea, the Navy has operated submarines in the Arctic since the 1940s and carries out a large training every year with them known as ICEX north of Alaska.

April, Navy Secretary Richard Spencer told the Senate Armed Services Committee that

the recent decrease in polar ice has prompted the Navy to begin preparing a new Arctic strategy just four years after the last one was released.

The plan will incorporate "blue-water" Arctic operations, in which ships without icebreaking capability sail in areas that were once more frozen, he said.

Asked by reporters after the hearing what triggered the new review, Spencer was blunt.

"The damn thing melted," he said.

SPECIAL OFFER

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DANIEL LOVE/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

U.S. Army paratroopers assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division fire 105mm howitzers during a 2014 night-fire training event at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

MILITARY

Mattis: US must balance rights, ties with Saudis

By KAREN DEYOUNG

The Washington Post

The United States must balance its concerns about Saudi Arabia's human rights record with the need to maintain a "strategic relationship" with the Saudis, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Wednesday.

In his first extended comments on last month's killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents in Istanbul, Mattis told reporters at the Pentagon that "there has to be accountability for anyone involved in the murder. Yes, I'm calling it murder."

"We're not going to apologize for our human rights stance," he said. "Nor are we going to apologize for working with Saudi Arabia when it's necessary for the good of innocent people who are in trouble."

"Presidents don't often get the freedom to work with unblemished partners," Mattis said.

It was in American interests to work with the Saudis to "stop the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen," he said. He also credited the Saudis with assisting in stepped-up U.S. efforts to bring the Taliban and the Afghan government together for reconciliation talks.

Mattis said that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, its coalition partner in Yemen, had largely ceased "offensive operations" over the last 72 hours around Hodeida, the key, rebel-held Yemeni port city where

Saudi airstrikes have hit civilian targets, including schools, and impeded the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Reports from the ground in and around Hodeida indicated that the airstrikes have stopped, although some ground skirmishes continued. The apparent ceasefire between the U.S.-backed coalition and Iran-backed Houthi rebels comes as both sides have agreed to attend U.N.-backed peace talks Mattis said would be held in Sweden in "very, very early December."

President Donald Trump, in an extraordinary statement Tuesday, cited potential profit from U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the kingdom's investments in this country as primary reasons for the United States to move past the Khashoggi controversy.

He discounted a CIA assessment, reported by The Washington Post last week, that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had ordered Khashoggi's killing, saying "maybe he did and maybe he didn't."

Mattis did not mention Trump's statement but said that he did not think that Mohammed's involvement "has been fully established either by the CIA or the Saudi government." Trump said the United States "may never know all the facts surrounding the murder."

Meanwhile, in a Tuesday interview published by the London-based, Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat, Saudi Foreign



KATHRYN E. HOLM/Courtesy of the Defense Department

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, left, meets with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz at the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., on March 22. Mattis spoke on Wednesday about the need for the U.S. to maintain its strategic ties with the Saudis.

Minister Adel al-Jubeir said that the kingdom's investigation of the killing was continuing but that "the Saudi leadership, represented by King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed, are a red line, and we will stand against attempts to undermine or harm them."

Media reports about the CIA determination, Jubeir said, "are leaks that are not based on damning evidence. At any rate, we in the kingdom know that such claims are completely baseless." The Saudi government has repeatedly denied that Mohammed had knowledge of or involvement in the killing. It said it has charged 11 Saudis — agents it said were authorized by a lower-level official only to nab Khashoggi and bring him back to the kingdom — with killing him.

Asked about possible negative repercussions on U.S. arms sales and defense assistance, which

bipartisan bills currently before Congress aim to halt over both the Yemen war and the Khashoggi killing, Jubeir said, "We prefer to be armed by our allies, but Saudi Arabia's commitment to defend its land and people obligates it to obtain the weapons it needs from any source."

Trump, in his statement, said that if the United States did not sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, long the world's largest purchaser of U.S. defense equipment, the Saudis would turn to Russia and China.

Jubeir criticized what he called a "media campaign and politicization" designed to undermine Saudi Arabia's standing in the world. He was particularly critical of Turkey, whose government has indirectly accused Mohammed of ordering the killing, which took place during a visit Khashoggi made to the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

The foreign minister said the kingdom was "keen on preserving this strategic relationship and historic partnership" with the United States "that has extended for over seven decades."

But statements from Ankara, he said, are "creating a rift in our ties" with Turkey.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, who met in Washington Tuesday with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and John Bolton, the White House national security adviser, said that evidence his country has amassed "is not pointing to anybody. But we are pretty sure these people didn't come by themselves and somebody instructed them," he said in a meeting with reporters, referring to the 15-member team of Saudi agents who both countries agree carried out the killing.

Khashoggi killing tests US defense industry's influence

By BETH REINHARD,
TOM HAMBURGER

AND EMMA BROWN

The Washington Post

The powerful U.S. defense industry is facing a rare challenge to its influence on Capitol Hill as support for arms sales to Saudi Arabia has rapidly eroded following the killing last month of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the hands of Saudi government operatives.

The defense industry's typically aggressive lobby has gone quiet as gruesome details of Khashoggi's death have leaked and American intelligence officials have laid blame at the feet of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Even as President Donald Trump has reiterated his support for continued sales of U.S. weapons to the kingdom, congressional opposition to those sales and to U.S. support for the Saudi-led

war in Yemen has mounted in recent weeks — testing the power of an industry that has sold tens of billions of dollars' worth of weapons systems to the kingdom since the 1950s.

Growing bipartisan support for Senate legislation to cut off the arms sales marks a historic disruption in a seemingly inviolable arms-for-oil trade relationship that stretches back decades and is an unusual setback for one of the most influential lobbies in Washington.

In the coming weeks, key senators are expected to push for a vote on a measure that would impose sanctions on Saudi officials responsible for Khashoggi's death and suspend many weapon sales to Saudi Arabia until it ceases airstrikes in Yemen that have killed tens of thousands of civilians.

The bill represents one of the first major breaks between con-



Khashoggi

gressional Republicans and the White House, which has embraced Saudi Arabia as a key Middle Eastern ally driven by a strategy

Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, who forged a strong personal relationship with the crown prince.

But Trump's staunch support for the kingdom in the face of the CIA's conclusion that Mohammed ordered the assassination of Khashoggi, a Washington Post contributing columnist, has triggered a backlash on Capitol Hill amid intensifying opposition to the war in Yemen.

In an interview Tuesday,

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a Trump confidant who previously opposed efforts to restrict arms sales to Saudi Arabia, suggested lawmakers might tie federal funding to Saudi sanctions. He is co-sponsoring the bipartisan Senate measure, which would suspend licenses for some weapons that had been previously approved.

"When it comes to the crown prince, it is not wise to look away," said Graham, calling the crown prince "a wrecking ball" on the global stage.

Other lawmakers who have backed arms deals with Saudi Arabia in the past and are now reconsidering their support include Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va.; Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y.; and House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, D-Md., according to recent votes and congressional aides.

In the House, lawmakers are signing on to several proposals

that would curtail Saudi deals, including one offered by Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., that would mandate updates on the investigation into Khashoggi's death before any new military sales to Saudi Arabia could be considered.

McGovern's district is home to Raytheon, which sells hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia each year and whose corporate PAC has been a top campaign donor for McGovern in recent years.

"I care very much about jobs," said McGovern, who was an early critic of the war in Yemen. "But I don't want to create jobs by selling weapons to governments that murder journalists in cold blood and then lie about it."

Officials from Raytheon, Boeing, Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics all declined requests for comment on the future of arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

NATION

Thanksgiving stirs emotions for survivors

STORY BY TAMARA LUSH | Associated Press | Photos via AP

Mass shootings, hurricanes, fires — for many people across the nation, 2018 was a year of loss unlike any other. During the quintessentially American holiday of Thanksgiving, some abandon traditions or chose not to mark the holiday at all. Others will celebrate new friendships forged in the wake of tragedy.



Fred Guttenberg speaks at a May news conference in Miami, with photos of his daughter Jaime behind him. Jaime was one of 17 killed in the Valentine's Day massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida.

PARKLAND, FLA.: 'A hard week'

Fred Guttenberg will start his Thanksgiving morning at a cemetery. His 14-year-old daughter, Jaime, was one of 17 people killed in the Valentine's Day massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

"This Thanksgiving is about loss," said Guttenberg, who will visit Jaime's grave with his wife, his son and their two dogs. "It's my first Thanksgiving without my daughter, and we're not going to leave her out of it."

After that, the family has no plans to celebrate or eat a turkey dinner. None of their past traditions seems appropriate. Jaime loved the holidays, her dad said. She looked forward to decorating the house and helping her mom with the cooking.

"This is going to be a hard week," Guttenberg said in a phone interview. He's been a vocal advocate for stricter gun laws and started Orange Ribbons For Jaime, an organization that raises money for gun reform and for causes that were important to his daughter. Nine months after the shooting, Guttenberg says his family is facing a season of firsts without Jaime, whom he described as the energy in the room. He had a request for families who have not lost any loved ones to gun violence: "Remember those who maybe aren't there this holiday and be part of the change that needs to happen in this country so it doesn't happen to them next."



Michael Reining, left, and Chelsea Meddings, right, chop mint Wednesday in preparation for a community Thanksgiving meal for survivors of the deadly Camp Fire in Northern California, on the campus of California State University, in Chico, Calif.

CALIFORNIA: Facebook angels

Athenia Dunham and daughter Natalie will spend Thanksgiving at the home of a woman they met less than two weeks ago, surrounded by new friends. Athenia call them "angels."

The Dunhams barely escaped their home in Paradise, Calif., on Nov. 8 as a deadly wildfire swept through their home. They were awoken by their pitbull, Luna, and flames were already burning the home next door. They made it out and to a hotel in nearby Redding, paying for the room with money from a homeowner's insurance payout.

On a normal Thanksgiving, Athenia said, she would be cooking for a few friends and preparing to "pig out and veg." But this year the holidays are the last thing on her mind.

"To be honest, I really don't even know what day it is — it feels like this just happened yesterday," she said Tuesday.

But an army of super volunteers who connected via Facebook have come together to help give the two women as normal a Thanksgiving as possible.

Beyond providing a meal, the volunteers have provided the mother and daughter with clothing, gift cards and a laptop so Natalie can keep up with her education.

"They're our angels — and angels have been with us since we left our driveway," Athenia said.



A makeshift memorial of flowers rests on bushes Tuesday outside the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.

PITTSBURGH: 'We must not forget'

Rabbi Jeffrey Myers had just begun Shabbat service at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh when the shooting began. Now, less than three weeks after the deadliest attack on Jews in the United States, he plans to celebrate Thanksgiving and encouraged others to do so too.

The day of the attack, Oct. 27, "will remain a constant wound," Myers said of the shooting that killed 11 people. But in his weekly blog post to his congregants, he wrote: "For me, just being able to sit in the same room with my family is immensely rewarding, something I was not certain I would ever have the opportunity to do again. That is why something so simple is so powerful and meaningful for me."

However, that is not enough, Myers said. He urged people to be aware of the less fortunate, those in the community who need food and shelter. And he suggested "one simple, yet meaningful gesture" that would make an impact. He asked people to count the number of friends and relatives gathered around their tables at Thanksgiving and donate that sum to charities that feed the hungry. People could also give more, or less.

"It is called tzedakah for an excellent reason: The root word, tzedek, means 'righteousness.' It is the right thing to do, and you know that. The needs of others did not disappear on Oct. 27. They remained, and we must not forget them."



Hector Morales, left, is hugged by friend Matthew Goss, a fisherman, as they reunite on Oct. 12 after Hurricane Michael, which destroyed Morales' home and Goss' boat in Mexico Beach, Fla.

MEXICO BEACH, FLA.: Thankful to be alive

The Rev. Eddie LaFountain of the First Baptist Church in Mexico Beach, Fla., plans to welcome 300 people to the parking lot of his storm-damaged church for Thanksgiving dinner.

He's held worship services in the lot since Hurricane Michael destroyed most of the community on Oct. 10. Since that Category 4 storm, the church has become one of the town's hubs for supplies, necessities and love.

"Thanksgiving Day is no different, LaFountain said.

"We just felt like we wanted to open it up to everybody that's here. Because some don't have ovens, some are here volunteering. Anybody's invited," he said. "Just to be thankful that God's given us life."

LaFountain's other job as a landscaper dried up since the hurricane, as did his wife's job cleaning condos. But he feels blessed that his apartment was unscathed, his children are safe and that he has firsthand evidence of the good in people every day.

Just a few days ago, volunteers put a new roof on the church. Inside, the donations of shoes, groceries, clothing and other items are free for the taking.

NATION

Trump spars with Roberts over judiciary

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and Chief Justice John Roberts clashed in an extraordinary public dispute over the independence of America's judiciary, with Roberts bluntly rebuking the president for denouncing a judge who rejected his migrant asylum policy as an "Obama judge."

There's no such thing, Roberts declared Wednesday in a strongly worded statement contradicting Trump and defending judicial independence. Never at risk for long, Trump defended his own comment, tweeting defiantly, "Sorry Justice Roberts."

The pre-Thanksgiving dustup was the first time that Roberts, the Republican-appointed leader of the federal judiciary, has offered even a hint of criticism of Trump, who has several times blasted federal judges who have ruled against him.

Before now, it has been highly unusual for a president to single out judges for personal criticism. And in a justice's challenge to a president's comments is downright unprecedented in modern times.

It seemed a fight that Trump would relish but one that Roberts has taken pains to avoid. But with Roberts' court feeling the heat



Chief Justice John Roberts said Wednesday that the U.S. doesn't have "Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges," responding to comments by President Donald Trump.

over the president's appointment of Justice Brett Kavanaugh, Roberts and several of his colleagues have gone out of their way to rebut perceptions of the court as a political institution divided between five conservative Republicans and four liberal Democrats.

Trump's appointments to the Supreme Court and lower federal courts have themselves spurred charges that the courts are becoming more politicized. As the justice widely seen as closest to the court's middle, Roberts could

determine the outcome of high-profile cases that split the court.

The new drama began with remarks Trump made Tuesday in which he went after a judge who ruled against his migrant asylum order. The president claimed, not for the first time, that the federal appeals court based in San Francisco was biased against him.

Roberts had refused to comment on Trump's earlier attacks on judges, including the chief justice himself. But on Wednesday, after a query by The Associated

Press, he spoke up for the independence of the federal judiciary and rejected the notion that judges are loyal to the presidents who appoint them.

"We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges. What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them," Roberts said.

On the day before Thanksgiving, he concluded, "The independent judiciary is something we should all be thankful for."

Trump hit back from his resort home in Florida, questioning the independence of federal judges appointed by his predecessor and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. He especially criticized judges on California's 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"Sorry Chief Justice John Roberts, but you do indeed have 'Obama judges,' and they have a much different point of view than the people who are charged with the safety of our country," the president tweeted.

If the 9th Circuit judges are independent, he said, "why are so many opposing view (on Border and Safety) cases filed there, and why are a vast number of those cases overturned. ... these rulings are making our country unsafe! Very dangerous and unwise!"

Trump has never been reticent

about criticizing the judiciary. Last year, the president scorned the "so-called judge" who made the first federal ruling against his travel ban. During the presidential campaign, he criticized Roberts himself for the chief justice's decisive vote in 2012 to preserve President Barack Obama's health care overhaul.

Trump also referred to an Indiana-born judge of Mexican descent, who was presiding over a fraud lawsuit against Trump University, as a Mexican who would be unable to rule fairly because of Trump's proposal to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border.

The president's remarks on Tuesday came when a reporter asked for his reaction to a ruling by U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar in San Francisco that put the administration's asylum policy on hold. Under that new policy, Trump declared no one could apply for asylum except at an official border entry point. That tends to back migrants up for months, if not years. A number of migrants remain in Tijuana after traveling in a caravan to reach the U.S.

The initial travel ban ruling in 2017 was issued by U.S. District Judge James Robert, an appointee of President George W. Bush in Washington state. Roberts, too, was appointed by Bush.

GOP studying parties' gender disparity in the new Congress

By ALAN FRAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For congressional Republicans, this month's elections ushered in the year of the woman — literally.

West Virginia's Carol Miller will be the only Republican woman entering the 435-member House as a newcomer in January. She'll join what may be the chamber's smallest group of female GOP lawmakers since the early 1990s — as few as 13 of at least 199 Republicans. Democrats will have at least 89.

Numbers like those have Republicans searching for answers to the glaring gender disparity in their ranks — and fast. The concern is that Democrats' lopsided edge among female voters could carry over to 2020, when President Donald Trump will be seeking a second term and House and Senate control will be in play. If the current trend continues, Republicans risk being branded the party of men.

"You will see a very significant recruiting effort occur for female candidates," said David Winston, a pollster who advises GOP congressional leaders. "It's a natural conclusion. An environment has got to be created where that can be a success."

Evidence of the GOP gender gap was just as clear in the 100-member Senate, where Tennessee Rep. Marsha Blackburn will be the only Republican freshman. If Mississippi Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith wins a runoff later this month there will be a record-setting seven GOP women in the Republican-run Senate. But even that record is less than half the class of 17 Democratic women, which includes two freshmen.

The search for answers leads to some fa-

miliar places. Trump's fraught history with women, combined with the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment, helped motivate Democratic women to seek office but did not appear to have the same effect with GOP women, politicians and analysts say. More broadly, the president's brash style doesn't sit well with many female voters or potential candidates.

"Women don't like the tweets," said Sarah Chamberlain, president of the Republican Main Street Partnership, a moderate GOP group. "I don't know how to tone down the rhetoric. If I could have a fantasy, one wish, that would be my one wish."

Women backed Democratic candidates over Republicans on Election Day by a telling 57 to 41 percent, according to AP VoteCast, a wide-ranging survey of the electorate conducted by The Associated Press. Women broke by similar margins in the crucial suburbs, where Democratic victories in swing districts helped power the gains they needed to win House control. Men supported Republicans over Democrats, 51 to 46 percent.

Strategists note the issue isn't just about current personalities; it's about party infrastructure.

"We as a party have to make recruiting women candidates who can win a high priority," said Andrea Bozek, spokeswoman for Winning for Women, a fledgling GOP group that tries bolstering female Republican candidates. "Unless people in leadership really make it a priority, I don't think it will happen."

A record number of women ran for the House as major party candidates this year. But Democrats outnumbered Republicans



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Rep.-elect Carol Miller, of West Virginia, is the only Republican woman who will enter the House as a newcomer in January.

by nearly 3 to 1, according to AP data, and Democratic women were more likely to win their primaries.

Of those contenders who ran in November, 183 were Democrats, the most ever, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. Fifty-two were Republicans, a near-record but a fraction of female Democrats running.

That partisan imbalance was aggravated by Democrats' superior campaign infrastructure for helping female candidates. Winning for Women, created in 2017, says it spent more than \$1 million helping female candidates for the recent election. That and other GOP groups assisting female candidates couldn't match Democrats' 33-year-old Emily's List, which poured tens of millions of dollars into primaries and general elections and provided recruiting and training to female candidates.

Congress to probe Ivanka Trump's private email use

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill will be scrutinizing Ivanka Trump's personal email use in the White House in light of new revelations that she sent hundreds of messages about government business from that account last year.

On Tuesday, the Republican chairmen of the Senate and House oversight committees — as well as a top House Democrat who will be wielding a gavel when his party takes power in January — called for the White House to provide more information about the email account and the nature of the messages President Donald Trump's daughter exchanged.

The moves renewed Republican-led congressional probes that had languished since last year when reports by Politico revealed that Ivanka Trump's husband, Jared Kushner, and other White House officials had been using private email for government purposes in possible violation of the Presidential Records Act and other federal record-keeping laws. The issue resurfaced this week when The Washington Post reported that the president's daughter, while a top White House adviser, sent hundreds of emails about government business from a personal account last year.

The president, who has spent years railing against Hillary Clinton's use of private email for public business while secretary of state, sought to differentiate his daughter's email use from his former opponent's.

"They aren't classified like Hillary Clinton. They weren't account like Hillary Clinton," Trump told reporters.

NATION

Pelosi moves closer to win

By KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. Nancy Pelosi appears to be having some success shrinking the ranks of Democratic lawmakers opposing her bid to serve a second stint as speaker of the House.

Rep. Brian Higgins, of western New York, announced Wednesday he will now support Pelosi after earlier signing on to a letter opposing her bid.

One day earlier, Marcia Fudge, of Ohio, announced she would back Pelosi after earlier flirting with the idea of running for the position herself.

Pelosi still has a daunting challenge ahead to secure 218 votes, but she is growing closer to that threshold with an aggressive behind-the-scenes campaign focused on addressing some of her constituents' concerns.

In Higgins case, he said he had several productive discussions with Pelosi and other party leaders. He said they will work with him to expand Medicare as an option for those between the ages of 50 and 65. He also said that one of the people he hoped would run for speaker, Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., told him she would be focusing on her bid to lead the Congressional Black Caucus.

Earlier in the year, Higgins had described Pelosi to the Buffalo News as "aloof, frenetic and misguided."

Higgins said Wednesday he had taken a "principled stand" in opposing Pelosi.

A principled stand, however, often requires a pragmatic outlook in order to meet with success," he said.



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., talks to reporters during a news conference at the Capitol on Nov. 15 in Washington.

The change, of course, comes shortly after Fudge announced her support for Pelosi just a few days after telling reporters she was seriously considering a run and that she needed to talk with her family about it during the Thanksgiving break.

Fudge said she was assured by Pelosi that black women, in particular, "will have a seat at the decision-making table." She was also named as incoming chair of a panel that will delve into voting rights access, a top priority of the new Democratic majority. Her decision also came the same day Fudge faced questions over her past support for a man now suspected of stabbing his ex-wife.

Pelosi seems certain to have enough support to become her party's nominee for speaker when

House Democrats vote by secret ballot on Nov. 28. She will need only a majority of Democrats in that contest.

But when the full House elects its new leaders Jan. 3, the speaker will need a majority 218 votes, assuming that no one votes "present" or misses the vote and Republicans oppose her en masse, as seems likely.

While the large majority of Democrats support Pelosi, others are concerned that she is hurting Democratic prospects in key swing districts where she is unpopular with a broad swath of voters.

The critics contend the 78-year-old Pelosi needs to step aside and make way for a new generation of leaders.

Ocasio-Cortez puts trek to Congress online

By LAURIE KELLMAN
and LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — She's cooked bean soup live and done laundry in public. She narrated much of what she calls "Congress camp" on Capitol Hill. We know what's in her bank account — less than \$7,000 — and what she thinks of reviews of her clothing.

Such intimate details have kept Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's star on the rise since she upset Democratic veteran Joe Crowley in New York's June primary. By the time she takes her seat in the House on Jan. 3 as the youngest woman ever elected to Congress, the 29-year-old Ocasio-Cortez will have blazed a new, more public trail to Washington and eventually shed light on the maze of Capitol Hill.

"Guys there are secret underground tunnels between all of these government buildings," she mock whispers in one social media post.

The passageways are hardly secret, as she notes — everyone from tourists to reporters and lawmakers jostle through them. But they can be hard to follow,

much like the twists and turns of congressional business.

So Ocasio-Cortez is posting not just about mundane tasks at home, but also about her life as a congresswoman-elect. And even though her Instagram stories don't stay online for long, she intends to keep up the posts in an effort to "humanize our government."

"A lot of times we'll tune in to cable news or watch what's going on on TV and all we're reading about is bills and all we're reading about is legislation or the political dynamics," she said Monday night on MSNBC. "But I think it's really important that we actually show people that government is a real thing, that it's something that you can be a part of."

The Ocasio-Cortez approach carries risks. Every word she utters and writes will be scrutinized in the big arena of Congress and the 2020 re-election campaigns that have effectively already begun.

Conservatives questioned her claim that she can't pay rent in pricey Washington. A spokesman for Ocasio-Cortez said Tuesday that she has less than \$7,000



SUSAN WALSH/AP

Rep.-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., talks with reporters in Washington on Nov. 14.

in her bank account to get her through the first congressional payday in January. She and each rank-and-file member will make \$174,000 a year.

For now, Ocasio-Cortez posted that her appearance Monday night will be the last "before we go dark" to set up two congressional offices — one in New York and one in Washington. But even that announcement raised questions among her followers.

"Don't worry, I'll still be on insta, twitter, etc.," she reassured them.



PHOTOS BY SCOTT G. WINTERSTON, DESERT NEWS/AP

U.S. Rep. Mia Love and Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams answer questions in a debate in Sandy, Utah, on Oct. 15. McAdams has been declared the victor in their race.

GOP's Love loses Utah election to McAdams

By BRADY MCCOMBS
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah's Mia Love was tabbed as a rising star in the GOP when she became the first black Republican woman in Congress with her 2014 victory.

But she became the latest Republican incumbent to fall in the midterm election's Democratic wave that has seen more than three dozen Republican-held seats flipped across the country.

Ben McAdams, a Democratic mayor of Salt Lake County, defeated Love by fewer than 700 votes in a back-and-forth race that took two weeks to sort out in deep-red Utah, according to final results released Tuesday.

Love had a built-in advantage with Republican voters outnumbering Democrats nearly 3-to-1 in the mostly suburban Salt Lake City district, but she never seemed to catch on with voters the way other Republican incumbents have in the state, said Damon Cann, a political science professor at Utah State University.

McAdams, 43, touted himself as a moderate, and not a typical Democrat, in a pitch that seemed to resonate in the district where nearly 4 in 10 voters are independents.

And he also benefited from record voter turnout that was driven in part by a medical marijuana ballot proposal that spurred progressive voters to the polls, Cann said.

Love, 42, tried to walk a tightrope regarding her support for President Donald Trump in a state that elected him 2016 but where the mostly Mormon electorate has long been uncomfortable with his brash style and his comments about women and immigrants.

She tried to distance herself from Trump on trade and immigration. She highlighted the times she stood up to the president, like when Trump used an expletive to describe her parents' home country of Haiti. But she backed Trump on the GOP-supported tax reform and appealed to voters to keep the House of Representatives in Republican hands.

Trump didn't appreciate her approach, calling her out by name in a news conference the morning after Election Day, where he also bashed other Republicans who he

said lost because they didn't fully embrace him.

Jill Hanauer, a Denver-based Democratic strategist, said Love couldn't shake the association with Trump despite her efforts.

"You can't have it both ways. It was a little too late," Hanauer said. "Mia Love lost because she ran in the shadow of Donald Trump."

Jason Perry, director of the University of Utah's Hinckley Institute of Politics, said he doesn't think Love did anything wrong while in office or during the campaign. He said Love simply ran up against a unique set of factors in facing a good candidate in McAdams who had previously served many of the district's voters as mayor and who benefited from the bump of the ballot propositions that brought more Democratic-leaning voters to the polls.

The race proved yet again that the district that covers a string of Salt Lake City suburbs stretching south along the Wasatch Front to Sanpete County in central Utah is very difficult to continually win, Perry said.

"It's just not a safe seat," he said.

McAdams will have to hold tight to his "blue-dog Democrat persona" and make good on his vow to work across the aisle with Republican members of the House to hold onto the seat in 2020, Perry said.

Love didn't concede or congratulate McAdams, but she also didn't signal that she would challenge the results. During the race, she sued a county to halt votes, but a judge threw out the lawsuit. Love finished about 20 votes short of being able to request a recount in a race where about 269,000 votes were cast.

This is the second time she has lost a bid for Congress by a razor-thin margin. In her first run in 2012, Love lost to incumbent Democrat Jim Matheson by 768 votes. She went on to defeat Democrat Doug Owens in 2014 and again in 2016.

For McAdams, it's a victory that validates his reputation as an emerging political force in Utah. He becomes the first Democratic member of Utah's congressional district since 2014 when longtime Rep. Jim Matheson retired after seven terms.

NATION

Pointed divide on border fence

By SUSAN MONTROYA BRYAN
Associated Press

The towering metal fence that divides the United States and Mexico at the edge of the Pacific Ocean has an imposing new feature: row upon row of razor wire.

The wire that's typically used in battlefields and on prison barriers is the most visible result of the \$210 million military deployment along the U.S.-Mexico border, creating an imposing sight for the crowd of Central American migrants gathering in Tijuana.

Soldiers and contractors have been installing different versions of the sharp wire barriers all along the border — on the fence, at ports of entry and on the banks of the Rio Grande in Texas to name a few.

"This is what it really looks like — no climbers anymore under our administration," President Donald Trump tweeted along with a photo of the fortified section in Southern California.

Military officials say they have more than 150 miles of concertina wire available to string up at strategic locations.

It is named after the musical instrument and its expanding and contracting bellows. It resembles barbed wire but that's commonly used to corral cattle, but it comes in flat



GREGORY BULL/AP

Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen, center, speaks with San Diego Sector Border Patrol chief Rodney Scott, left, Tuesday next to a section of the border wall fortified with razor wire.

coils that can quickly expand like its namesake, making it easier to store, transport and install.

It has been the wire of choice for militaries around the world since World War I.

Made in factories today using galvanized steel, concertina wire consists of sharp flat blades. It's used to secure businesses, prisons and other government installations.

Critics have blasted Trump's military deployment at the border as an expensive political stunt — and question why active-duty troops are needed for tasks that contractors could perform.

According to figures reported to Congress on Tuesday, the Pentagon estimates the cost of the military's mission on the U.S.-Mexico border will be about \$210 million under current plans. That includes money for active-duty troops and National Guard troops.

What's not clear is how much has been spent on materials like razor wire.

A ton of razor wire can go for several hundred dollars while a single coil can be bought online for as little as \$30.

It's up to U.S. Customs and Border Protection to tell the military where to put the wire. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has said the short-term objective has been to get enough wire and other barriers in place as requested by border officials.

A Defense Department spokesman, Army Col. Robert Manning, told reporters earlier this week that more than 4 miles of wire obstacles and shoes, bullets in Arizona and California.

The focus has been in the San Diego area, where it can be seen by migrants waiting on the south side of the border. It also has been put up at the Otay Mesa port of

entry in California and at less populated spots near crossings in Nogales and Douglas, Ariz., and in Laredo, Hidalgo and Brownsville, Texas.

But is it effective? U.S. Customs and Border Protection released video last week showing a man cutting through wire that border agents had placed just hours before on a fence near Yuma, Ariz.

Arizona Border Patrol agents for several months have been overwhelmed by the arrival of large numbers of Central American migrants traveling as families. During a 48-hour period last week, agents in the Yuma area apprehended more than 650 people who crossed illegally.

Customs and Border Protection officials have argued that additional barriers and the deployment of National Guard and military troops have helped to free up agents.

Ruling will affect disability benefits

Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Amy Jo Hicks lost her federal disability benefits because her lawyer, Eric Conn, got caught bribing doctors and judges to win approvals for his clients.

The Social Security Administration sent her a letter telling her she had to pay back \$62,000 in benefits she had already received. She moved into an RV with no bathroom, signed up for food stamps and sank deeper into depression.

Conn and her doctor, Bradley Adkins, were later sentenced to prison for the scheme. But her lawyers argued that not all the evidence compiled by her doctor was tainted, and they should have a right to rebut in court claims that she received benefits because of fraud. Wednesday, a federal appeals court agreed with her, ruling the Social Security Administration used an unconstitutional process to revoke benefits for hundreds of Conn's former clients.

"There is a distinct dignitary harm to beneficiaries who are not allowed to effectively dispute the allegation that they have been receiving undeserved benefits for close to ten years, leeching government resources to which they had no right," wrote a panel of three judges on the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals.

One of Hicks' attorneys, Evan Smith, said she has since had her benefits restored and is "in a much better situation." Wednesday's ruling could also lead to hundreds of other people getting their benefits back.

It's the latest twist in the saga of Conn, a flamboyant eastern Kentucky attorney known for his colorful TV commercials and his law offices that featured a replica of the Lincoln Memorial. Conn pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 12 years in prison for the largest Social Security fraud in history. He fled the country to avoid prison but was caught outside a Pizza Hut in Honduras and later sentenced to an additional 1.5 years in prison.

While Conn was fighting and fleeing the charges, thousands of his former clients had to defend their disability benefits in a series of hearings before administrative law judges. In those hearings, doctors threw out all evidence from the doctors connected with Conn. His clients were not allowed to challenge that decision. Hicks was examined by Adkins, a psychologist who was later convicted of signing medical forms that contained false information. Prosecutors said Conn paid Adkins \$350 for each form. A judge later sentenced him to 25 years in prison.

In its first round of hearings, the Social Security Administration reviewed benefits for 350 people. It revoked benefits for about 47 percent of the cases. Earlier this year, the agency announced it would review benefits for roughly 2,000 other people. It's unclear how Wednesday's ruling will affect those hearings.

Doctors hit back against NRA

Associated Press

The photos from doctors came quickly and in succession: blood-stained operating rooms, blood-covered scrubs and shoes, bullets piercing body parts and organs.

The pictures on Twitter were an emotional response to a smack-down by the powerful gun industry lobby, which took issue with the American College of Physicians' call late last month for tighter gun control laws. The recommendations included bans on "assault weapons," large capacity magazines and 3D-printed firearms.

"Someone should tell self-important anti-gun doctors to stay in their lane. Half of the articles in Annals of Internal Medicine are pushing for gun control. Most upsetting, however, the medical community seems to have conspired NO ONE but themselves," the National Rifle Association tweeted.

Physicians across the United States seized on the phrasing, taking to Twitter with 22,000 comments and the hashtags #thisismylane and #thisisourlane,

posting photos of their encounters with gun violence and offering their own personal stories of treating such wounds.

The debate gained new urgency this week with the shocking death of an emergency room doctor outside the hospital where she worked, as physicians argue shootings are a public health crisis that they must play a key role in trying to stem. Dr. Tamara O'Neal was killed Monday outside a hospital in Chicago in what police say was a dispute with her ex-fiance. The shooter and two other people — a responding police officer and a resident in the hospital's pharmacy — also died.

"It just shows that not only is this in our lane, but this happens to us," said Dr. Joseph Sakran, a trauma surgeon at Johns Hopkins Medicine in Baltimore who as a 17-year-old was shot in the throat by a stray bullet fired during a dispute at a high school football game. Sakran created a Twitter account @ThisIsOurLane which in just two weeks has attracted near 15,000 followers.

About 35,000 people each year

are killed by guns in the United States, and about two-thirds are suicides. That's about 670 people per week and among the largest number of civilian gun deaths in the world. The world's highest rate of gun deaths is in El Salvador with a rate of 72.5 per 100,000, the rate in the U.S. is 3.1 per 100,000.

Dr. Judy Melinek, a forensic pathologist in the San Francisco Bay area, took to Twitter to push back at the gun lobby: "Do you have any idea how many bullets I pull out of corpses weekly? This isn't just my lane. It's my (explosive) highway."

"The chutzpah, the gall is what really got to me," Melinek told The Associated Press. "The NRA seems to think they've cornered the market on expertise when it comes to guns. And that's not correct."

Dr. Arthur Przebindowski, director of the gun rights advocacy group Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership, said the pushback from physicians is largely driven by more liberal forces within medical academia and based on ignorance about firearms.



Dr. Kirsten M. Gee, Twitter/AP

Doctors tweeted many photos of blood-stained scrubs and operating rooms after the gun industry lobby took issue with a position paper urging adoption of gun control laws.

NATION



NATHAN HUNSINGER, THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/AP

Courtney Turner talks about an apartment fire at the intersection of Interstate 635 and Ferguson Road in Dallas on Wednesday.

Woman in apartment fire drops baby to bystander

Associated Press

DALLAS — Some residents of a Dallas apartment complex leaped from third-floor windows onto mattresses, and a woman dropped her baby to a bystander to escape the flames.

Dallas Fire-Rescue spokesman Jason Evans said several residents and bystanders, assisted by police officers, went door-to-door to alert others to the fire Wednesday morning. Authorities said three people, including a fire-

fighter, suffered minor injuries.

KDFW-TV reported one woman dropped her infant to a man below as he held out his arms. Other residents were seen jumping from third-story windows onto mattresses dragged from inside the east Dallas complex before firefighters arrived. The Dallas Morning News reports at least five residents jumped from the third level.

Investigators are trying to determine what started the fire that destroyed about two dozen units.

4 in New Jersey mansion fire killed by 'homicidal violence'

By WAYNE PARRY

Associated Press

COLTS NECK, N.J. — A family of four whose remains were found at the burned-down ruins of their New Jersey mansion was slain before the home was set ablaze, authorities said Wednesday, hours after the mansion owner's brother was arrested on suspicion of arson at his own house.

Prosecutors sought to reassure the public that a random killer was not on the loose in the affluent community of Colts Neck, which is also home to some celebrities.

"We believe that this family in some form or fashion was targeted," Monmouth County Prosecutor Christopher Gramiccinio said.

Paul Caniero, 51, was charged with setting fire to his home Tuesday in Ocean Township. Less than eight hours later, the fire that destroyed his brother's home was reported about 80 miles away in Colts Neck, authorities said.

Gramiccinio said he could neither confirm nor deny that Paul Caniero was a suspect in the slayings.

At the mansion, Keith Caniero, 50, was found shot to death on the lawn. Inside, authorities found the remains of his wife, Jennifer Caniero, 45, and their children, Jesse, 11, and Sophia, 8.

The bodies of the mother and children were badly burned. Medical examiners had not deter-

mined causes of death for them as of Wednesday afternoon.

It was not immediately known if Paul Caniero had retained an attorney. He was charged with aggravated arson and was scheduled to make a first appearance in court next Wednesday.

Paul Caniero was accused of using gasoline to set his home on fire while his wife and two daughters were inside. No one was hurt in that blaze, which was reported at 5 a.m. Tuesday, about 7½ hours before the Colts Neck fire was reported.

Keith and Paul Caniero were partners at a technology firm in Asbury Park called Square One. All four members of Keith Caniero's family were "victims of homicidal violence," the prosecutor said, adding that there was no indication of suicide.

The community held a vigil for the family Wednesday night. Colts Neck Mayor J.P. Bartolomeo said the Canieros were well-known in town and often seen at local shops or school sporting events.

Colts Neck, about 50 miles south of New York City, is home to a number of celebrities, including Bruce Springsteen. Former "Daily Show" host Jon Stewart and his wife operate an animal sanctuary there. Queen Latifah sold her mansion there in 2015.

Current and former members of the band Bon Jovi have also called it home.

Gunman in Calif. shooting had shown warning signs

By AMANDA LEE MYERS
AND JUSTIN PRITCHARD
Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — At first, the outlines of the mass shooter's 28 years appeared unremarkable.

Ian David Long enlisted in the Marines out of high school and married at 19. Within five years, he was honorably discharged, divorced and in college.

As the picture sharpened, troubling details emerged — the kinds of clues that, in hindsight, make people wonder out loud whether the impulse that led Long to kill 12 people at a country music bar had been forming in plain sight.

Neighbors avoided him. He made them uncomfortable, and then there were the fits of aggressive yelling and property destruction at the home Long shared with his mom. One of his high school coaches says he scared her.

Others who interacted with Long at different spots — high school classmates, Marines in his regiment, professors — struggled to recall much about him. Meanwhile, family who did know him and investigators who are learning his story aren't talking publicly.

One thing that has leaked out: During the Nov. 7 massacre at the Borderline Bar & Grill, Long posted on social media about whether people would think he was insane.

Authorities haven't settled on a theory of why Long opened fire,

then killed himself. Reconstructing a motive may take weeks, or much longer.

Long's desire to join the Marines dated at least to high school. It was a life goal that helped rescue him from consequences when, a decade ago, Long allegedly assaulted a track coach.

One day at practice, Dominique Colell was asking who owned a cell telephone. Long said it was his. When she didn't immediately hand it over, she said, he grabbed her rear and midsection.

Another time, Long mimicked shooting her in the head. "I literally feared for myself around him," said Colell, who no longer coaches at Newbury Park High School.

She wanted to kick Long off the team. Another coach argued the black mark could jeopardize his goal of joining the military. Long, a sprinter was allowed to stay.

A third coach, Evie Cluke, recalled profanity-laced tirades that forced people to back away.

"The warning signs were there," Cluke said.

In a calm moment, she asked Long why he wanted to enlist.

"When we hear somebody say they want to be in the military because they want to kill people in the name of our country, that's chilling," Cluke said.

Long's family had a military pedigree. His grandfather was a Naval Academy graduate who served 30 years and retired with

the rank of commander.

Long enlisted a few months after high school graduation. It was 2008.

Stationed in Hawaii, Long became a machine gunner. Two weeks before he returned from a seven-month deployment in Afghanistan in 2011, he legally separated from his wife of two years.

Authorities with the Ventura County Sheriff's Department have publicly speculated that, like many veterans, Long suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. No such diagnosis has been confirmed.

What Long did over the past two years is largely a public mystery.

In April, one particularly alarming uproar on the Longs' property prompted an intervention.

"It sounded to me like the man was out of his head," said Tom Hanson, a next-door neighbor who called 911.

Deputies summoned a mental health specialist, who interviewed Long. A 72-hour involuntary psychiatric commitment requires an "imminent" threat of harm, and the specialist concluded his behavior wasn't extreme enough.

The standard can be tough to meet, said Marisa Randazzo, who has interviewed five mass shooters as the former chief research psychologist for the U.S. Secret Service. "We don't want laws because somebody can be taken in because of something they said over Thanksgiving dinner," she said.

Man faces 17 charges in sexual assaults, murder

By JIM SALTER

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — A man was charged with killing one woman and sexually assaulting two others after herding them at gunpoint into the back room of a suburban St. Louis religious supplies shop.

The arrest of Thomas Bruce, 53, of Imperial, ended a two-day manhunt that followed the brazen Monday afternoon attack at a Catholic Supply store in another St. Louis suburb, Ballwin. The attack frightened the region and led some schools, churches and businesses to close.

Bruce was charged Wednesday with 17 counts, including first-degree murder, sodomy and attempted sodomy, kidnapping and other crimes. He is jailed without bond, and it wasn't clear if he had an attorney yet.

At a news conference announcing the arrest, St. Louis County prosecutor Bob McCulloch called the crime "heartbreaking," a sentiment that was echoed by the county's police chief, Jon Belmar.

"It shocked the senses," a somber Belmar said.

Authorities allege that Bruce

entered the store and said he was shopping, then left briefly before returning with a handgun. He forced the three women into the back room, told them to strip, exposed himself and ordered them to "perform deviant sexual acts on him," detectives wrote in the criminal complaint.

Two of the women complied but the third, Jamie Schmidt, 53, of nearby House Springs, refused, so he shot her in the head, they wrote. The attacker ordered the other women to continue performing the sexual acts on him, and he later fled, apparently able to blend in along the busy street in broad daylight.

McCulloch said there was no indication the store was targeted because of its religious affiliation.

"It seems to me a guy like this saw an opportunity — three women in the store alone," McCulloch said.

Bruce, who claimed to be a Navy veteran on his LinkedIn page, had no previous criminal record in Missouri beyond a traffic ticket in 2001. McCulloch said his office is checking with other states.

Belmar said tips from the pub-

lic helped lead to Bruce's arrest, though he declined to elaborate.

McCulloch said the aggravating circumstances make the crime eligible for the death penalty, but he said that decision will be up to the jury who replaced him in January. McCulloch, the county's prosecutor for nearly three decades, lost to Wesley Bell, of Ferguson, in the August Democratic primary. Bell ran unopposed in the November general election.

Dan Stutte, president of Catholic Supply store, which operates three stores in the St. Louis area, said the company was "deeply relieved" by the arrest.

Schmidt, of House Springs, was a married mother of three who worked as a secretarial assistant at St. Louis Community College's campus in Wildwood, Mo. Two of her children are adults and the third is in high school.

Several members of her parish, St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in High Ridge, gathered for a memorial service Tuesday to remember Schmidt, who sang in the church choir. A friend told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that Schmidt may have been at the store to buy supplies to make rosaries for fellow parishioners.

NATION

Lawsuit says 'God Pod' at Va. jail violates Constitution

By DENISE LAVOIE
Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — A Muslim civil rights group filed a federal lawsuit Wednesday against a regional jail in Virginia, alleging that the jail has set up a "Christians-only unit" dubbed the "God Pod."

The Council on American-Islamic Relations says officials at the Riverside Regional Jail have set aside a housing pod exclusively for Christian inmates who promise to live in accordance with the Bible. The group says the Christian pod violates the Constitution by favoring one religion over others.

The lawsuit accuses jail officials of discriminating against Muslim inmates and others by preventing them from participating in programs that teach their faith and excluding them from the housing unit, nicknamed the "God Pod" by inmates.

Lena Masri, CAIR's national litigation director, said inmates told the group's attorneys that about 30 to 40 inmates have been moved into the pod since it was

established several weeks ago. Masri said a flyer posted in the jail described the "Life Learning Program" as a program conducted by chaplains with the Good News Jail & Prison Ministry, a group that says on its website that it has chaplains providing Bible-based programs in 22 states.

Masri said the lawsuit filed Wednesday adds claims to a suit filed earlier this year by an inmate who alleged that Muslims were not provided food before the morning prayer so those observing the Ramadan fast were not able to eat before beginning their fast. Masri said other Muslim inmates have complained that they have not had access to regular Islamic classes at the jail.

"You have a state entity that is endorsing and promoting Christianity over other religions, so Riverside has unlawfully sent a message of favoring Christianity over other religions, while at the same time actively preventing other faith groups — including Muslims — from practicing their own faith," Masri said.

The lawsuit contends that the Christian pod is unconstitutional

on several fronts, including violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from establishing an official religion or unduly favoring one religion over another. It asks for an injunction to order the jail to dismantle the pod and to provide Muslim inmates with access to Islamic programming and adequate nutrition during Ramadan.

The flyer posted in the jail said the Life Learning Program is open to inmates "of any faith group."

"The purpose of this program is to give you the opportunity to learn Biblical-based life-skills and put them into practice so you may experience lasting change in your life," it states.

Gadeir Abbas, a senior litigation attorney for CAIR, said the program is open only to those who want to study the Bible and live in accordance with the Bible.

"So really, it isn't open to inmates of all faiths or it is only open to inmates of other faiths who are looking to convert to Christianity," Abbas said.

Prosecutor declines case against Avenatti

By BRIAN MELLEY
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles district attorney declined to prosecute attorney Michael Avenatti on felony domestic abuse charges on Wednesday and referred allegations that he roughed up his girlfriend to the city attorney for a possible misdemeanor case.

Avenatti, 47, was arrested on suspicion of felony domestic violence last week after his girlfriend told police he abused her at his Los Angeles apartment following an argument.

A restraining order against Avenatti was issued after actress Marelli Minniti said he dragged her by the arm across a bedroom floor.

Avenatti, who had called the allegations "completely false" and a fabrication, said in a statement he was thankful the district attorney had rejected the charges and was "especially grateful for justice" at Thanksgiving.

"I am completely innocent. I have absolute faith in the system that I will be fully exonerated," Avenatti told The Associated Press. "This whole thing is bogus."

Avenatti, who is mulling a presidential run, is best known as the attorney for porn actress Stormy Daniels, who has said she had an affair with President Donald Trump in 2006, a claim Trump denies.

As Daniels' lawyer, Avenatti has pursued the president and those close to him relentlessly for months, taunting Trump in in-

terviews and baiting him and his lawyers in tweets.

Minniti said in her request for a restraining order that she was wearing only a T-shirt and underwear when Avenatti grabbed her by the arm and dragged her out of bed. She said she was scratched on her side and leg. Court papers include photographs that appear to show bruises.

The order was granted Monday.

Attorneys for the legal aid group that represents Minniti declined to comment.

Avenatti said that he would be vindicated once footage from security cameras in the building was reviewed, even though the violence described by Minniti would not have occurred in the building's public areas.

Facebook exec takes fall for hiring opposition firm

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Facebook's outgoing head of communications is taking the blame for hiring Definers, the public relations firm doing opposition research on the company's critics, including billionaire philanthropist George Soros.

In a Facebook post that went up late Wednesday, Elliot Schrage said the responsibility to hire Definers rests with him and that he approved the decision to hire it and similar firms.

Schrage provided his explana-

tion in a message sent Tuesday to Facebook's employees, but the company waited until late Wednesday to publicly share it at a time when most people in its home country were focusing on the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg also didn't mention Schrage's role in hiring and working with Definers in an interview with CNN aired late Tuesday.

In the post, Schrage acknowledged that Facebook asked Definers "to do work" on Soros after he called Facebook a "menace to society" in a January speech.

Even so, Schrage conceded that Definers' got carried away in its work to discredit Facebook's critics.

Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, followed up with Schrage's note of contrition with one of her own, acknowledging her responsibility for overseeing Facebook's communications team.

"Some of our work was incorporated into materials presented to me and I received a small number of emails where Definers was referenced," Sandberg wrote.



TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY (IOWA) JOURNAL/AP

Brooklyn Bockelmann, an eighth-grader at Le Mars Middle School in Iowa, demonstrates how a pet oxygen mask is used during an interview on Thursday at the Le Mars Fire Department.

Student raises funds for animal oxygen masks

By NICK HYTREK
Sioux City Journal

LE MARS, Iowa — To say Brooklyn Bockelmann loves dogs might be an understatement.

Dressed in leggings covered with dog images, socks that feature dogs and a hoodie promoting animal adoption, the 14-year-old Le Mars eighth-grader leaves no doubt about her love for dogs.

She knows that other people are just as crazy about their four-legged family members as she is and would be devastated if something were to happen to them. It's why Brooklyn is working to provide pet oxygen masks to every fire department in Iowa — more than 600 — so firefighters can treat and revive pets rescued from house fires.

"If it has to do with dogs, I'm going to do it," said Brooklyn, who has a German shepherd named Bear and a German shorthaired pointer named Jake.

She's launched Operation O2 Fur Pets to raise money for her cause, which started with the modest goal of providing masks for the Le Mars Fire Department, then for each department in Plymouth County.

"Once I got that done, I thought it would be a good idea to do it for all of Iowa," Brooklyn told the Sioux City Journal.

Where does a middle schooler get the idea for such a project? Facebook, of course.

Earlier this year, Brooklyn and members of the Stanton Luck Clovers 4-H club had done random acts of kindness. Brooklyn enjoyed the community service project and wanted to do more. At about the same time, a news story popped onto her mother's Facebook page about a dog that had been saved in a California

house fire by firefighters using a mask that had been donated by Girl Scouts there. Jennifer Bockelmann showed the story to her daughter, and a light bulb lit up above Brooklyn's head.

The masks, sold by Wag'n O2 Fur Life in Vancouver, Wash., sell for \$90 plus \$30 for shipping.

At a middle school dance this past spring, Brooklyn sold root beer floats and raised nearly \$300. She bought chocolate paw prints and paw-printed bracelets, then sold them at Woodstock, a Plymouth County Historical Society fundraiser, in the spring. She set up a GoFundMe site on the internet.

It didn't take long until she was able to buy masks to stock all of Plymouth County's fire and rescue services in Le Mars, Akron, Hinton, Kingsley, Merrill, Remsen and Oyens.

"I had money left over, and I just love dogs," she said. "I decided to do Iowa."

Brooklyn has continued to operate the GoFundMe site, and at the Plymouth County Fair this past summer, she set up a booth selling bracelets and homemade dog treats. For a 4-H project, she did an educational presentation at the fair. Her presentation was chosen to advance to the Iowa State Fair, where she presented it again. She recently sent out fundraising letters to local animal-related businesses.

She's since donated masks to fire departments in Moline, Lawton and Sergeant Bluff, bringing the total of masks given away to 12.

She's got her public awareness campaign down. According to Brooklyn's research, 40,000-150,000 animals die each year in house fires in the United States.

SCIENCE

Small satellites face biggest test with Mars lander

By MARCIA DUNN
Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — A pair of tiny experimental satellites trailing NASA's InSight spacecraft all the way to Mars face their biggest test yet.

Their mission: Broadcast immediate news, good or bad, of InSight's plunge through the Martian atmosphere on Monday.

Named WALL-E and EVE after the main characters in the 2008 animated movie, the twin CubeSats will pass within a few thousand miles of Mars as the lander attempts its dicey touchdown.

If these pipsqueaks manage to relay InSight's radio signals to ground controllers nearly 100 million miles away, we'll know within minutes whether the spacecraft landed safely.

WALL-E and EVE, each the size of a briefcase, hitched a ride on the same rocket that launched InSight to Mars in May. CubeSats always share rockets; they're too small and inexpensive to warrant their own launch. This Mars Cube One project, or MarCO, built and managed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, cost \$18.5 million.

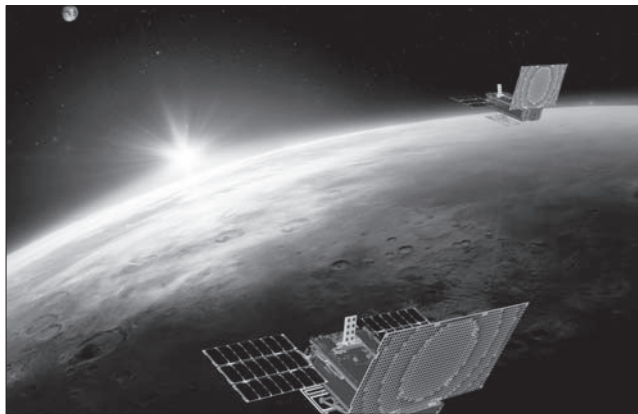
NASA kept the CubeSats about 6,000 miles away from InSight during the 300 million-mile journey to Mars to prevent any col-

lisions or close calls. The mini satellites were just as far from each other for the same reason. The elbow room in this "very loose formation," as chief engineer Andy Klesh describes it, has varied during the mission and is narrowing as the spacecraft draws ever closer to Mars.

For the record, EVE has behaved better than WALL-E during the 6½-month voyage to Mars. Each CubeSat has the same type of cold gas propulsion that's used in fire extinguishers to spray foam. In the film, WALL-E uses a fire extinguisher to propel through space. In reality, WALL-E has been leaking fuel almost since liftoff. Flight controllers have worked around the problem. Meanwhile, "EVE seems to follow her namesake and has been flying beautifully throughout the mission," said Klesh.

In June, WALL-E and EVE aired a series of radio-relay tests using signals from a big dish antenna near Palo Alto, Calif. Klesh said that gives engineers confidence in the CubeSats' ability to do the same with InSight's signals on landing day. Last month, the pair sent back photos of Mars from 8 million miles out. Mars was merely a bright pinpoint, but the team said it marked a proud CubeSat first.

It takes eight minutes and

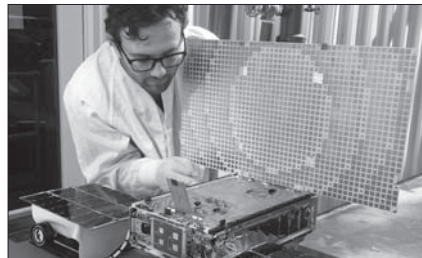


PHOTOS BY NASA, JPL-CALTECH/AP

This illustration from March 2018 shows the twin Mars Cube One project spacecraft flying over Mars with Earth and the sun in the distance. The MarCOs are designed to fly along behind NASA's InSight lander on its cruise to Mars.

seven seconds for a radio signal to get from Mars to Earth, one way. It should take less than a minute on top of that to get word from InSight if the mini satellites cooperate. That means NASA could know InSight's fate close to real time. If WALL-E and EVE are mum, confirmation would come directly from the lander or, hours later, from spacecraft circling Mars.

Whether or not they provide any insight on InSight, WALL-E and EVE will zoom past Mars and remain in an elliptical orbit around the sun. Engineers expect them to keep working for a couple of weeks beyond Mars depending on how long the fuel and electronics last.



Engineer Joel Steinkraus uses sunlight to test the solar arrays on one of the MarCO spacecraft at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif.

Researchers answer question you didn't ask: How do wombats poop cubes?

By CLEVE R. WOOTSON JR.
The Washington Post

Of all the adaptations that allow our animal brethren to soar through the air or endure the darkness and crushing pressure of the ocean's depths, there is one property that is unique in kingdom animalia.

Only wombats can produce cubical poop. Think about it, though preferably not while eating and definitely not out loud. Of all the animals you can picture in your mind's eye, which one produces scat that is flat on all sides and could reasonably be used to quiz geometry students?

But how does it get that way? And does it provide any evolutionary advantage to wombats as they take a trip on the circle of life? Those questions about wombat poop have perplexed scientists since wombat poop-studying scholars have existed, and the answers have eluded mankind until this precise moment in human history.

Now, we have answers, and they are distinctly intertwined with the nature of the Australian animal.

Gauging wombats by sight alone, the marsupials are what scientists would officially refer to as cuddly. But in the wild, they're actually pretty aggressive and territorial — essentially cantankerous cousins of koalas.

Although it's rare for wombats to attack humans, YouTube videos abound of the muscular marsupials going after zookeep-



iStockPhoto

A wombat roams in Narawntapu National Park, Australia.

ers, hissing and snorting at stunned videographers and startling BBC animal show hosts.

Still, wombats aren't itching for a fight. They're herbivores that subsist on roots and other plant matter, and usually only attack when threatened. Mostly, they just want to be left alone.

That's where the poop comes into play. Wombats produce up to 100 cubes of poop each night, and surround their mazelike dens with it to serve as a no trespassing sign to other wombats — a border wall made out of poop, according to National Geographic. Wombats are nocturnal and have poor eyesight, so the wall is essentially made

of smell. Wombats that are better able to deter unwanted strangers are more likely to avoid conflict and injury, and thus increase their reproductive success, according to the magazine.

But round poop rolls, and can't stay in place on the ground or the logs and rocks that dot the wombat's landscape.

Still, determining the biological mechanics of how wombat poop turns into a cube understandably took some particularly involved science.

Patricia Yang, a postdoctoral fellow at Georgia Tech, has dedicated her young career to studying, in intricate detail, the biomechanics of how animals poop and pee.

A significant chunk of her research involved her and other students going to Atlanta's zoo and taking slow-motion video of animals pooping and peeing. For science.

Studying how nature has solved some of the problems of physics is a distinct branch of design known as biomimicry. Excreting urine and feces is a biological function, but it's also a physical action, using energy and specially made structures to move solids and liquids around.

An elephant's urinary tract, for example, can move nearly half a bathtub of water in 20 seconds. As Yang says in her dissertation, it's an example of "scalable hydrodynamic systems." Studying how an elephant empties its bladder can provide insight into how to make a better fire hose or sewage pipe.

Biomimicry is particularly useful when designing systems to be more energy efficient and less wasteful. What is a more efficient user of solar energy than a blade of grass?

But understanding the inner workings of wombats required Yang to do much more than setting her video camera to slo-mo mode and dodging suspicious zookeepers.

Yang and other researchers acquired dead wombats that had been hit by cars in Tasmania and euthanized by a veterinarian, according to her paper's abstract.

They emptied out the animals' dietary tracts and filled it with a balloon, which they used to study the pressure exerted by the walls of the intestines. As a control, they similarly inflated pig intestines.

They found that in the final 8 percent of the wombat intestines — the homestretch of a two-week digestive process where wombat feces turns from a liquid into a solid — the intestines are not uniformly elastic. This difference in elasticity molds the feces into a specific shape.

The result: Perfectly stackable wombat poop, with a practical purpose that could cross into the human manufacturing industry.

"We currently have only two methods to manufacture cubes," Yang told National Geographic Magazine. Throughout history, humans have either cut cubes from hard materials or molded them from soft ones.

"Wombats have a third way."

WORLD

China denies US claims of hacking before meeting

Associated Press

BEIJING — China on Thursday rejected a U.S. government report that accuses Beijing of stepping up efforts to steal technology ahead of a meeting between Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping.

The Commerce Ministry dismissed the U.S. Trade Representative's report as "new unwarranted accusations" and said Washington was wrecking economic relations.

The two sides have raised tariffs on billions of dollars of each other's goods in a fight over U.S. complaints that Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology in violation of its market-opening obligations.

The USTR report said Chinese computer hacking attacks aimed at stealing American technology have increased this year while Beijing made no basic changes to policies its trading partners consider improper.

"This is completely unacceptable to China," said a Commerce Ministry spokesman, Gao Feng. "We hope the U.S. side will stop the words and deeds of destroying bilateral economic and trade relations."

Gao called on Washington to "create favorable conditions" to get economic relations "back on the right track."

Tuesday's report added a potential new irritant before Trump and Xi meet in Buenos Aires dur-

'We hope the U.S. side will stop the words and deeds of destroying bilateral economic and trade relations.'

Gao Feng
Chinese Commerce Ministry

ing a gathering of the Group of 20 major economies.

Economists say there is little chance the meeting by itself will provide a settlement to a dispute companies worry will chill global economic growth.

The Trump administration is pressing Beijing to roll back plans for state-led development of Chinese competitors in robotics and other fields.

Washington, Europe, Japan and other trading partners say those violate China's trade obligations. Communist leaders see them as a route to prosperity and global influence.

American and Chinese officials have been talking in preparation for the Trump-Xi meeting. News reports say Beijing has sent written proposals but no details have been released.

Beijing has tried without success to recruit France, Germany, Japan and other governments as allies against Trump.



PATRICK VAN KATWIJK/AP

Dutch King Willem-Alexander looks at Anne Frank's diary displayed in the new Diary Room at the renovated Anne Frank House Museum in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on Thursday.

Dutch king visits renewed Anne Frank House museum

Associated Press

AMSTERDAM — Dutch King Willem-Alexander visited the Anne Frank House museum Thursday after a two-year reboot to give the building a new saddle to shore, redesigned exhibition spaces and a new way of telling the story of the teenage Jewish diarist.

The aim of renewing the landmark museum was to "provide more information about the historical context and background of the story we represent, which is the story of Anne Frank," executive director Ronald Leopold said

Wednesday night at a press preview of the renewed museum.

What hasn't changed is the museum's moving centerpiece: the Spartan secret annex reached via a door concealed behind a bookcase, where Anne wrote her famous diary as she, her family and four other Jews hid for two years from Nazis during World War II until they were arrested and deported to concentration camps.

The museum believes that telling Anne's story remains relevant more than 60 years after she and her sister both died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after contracting typhus.

Leopold said the museum, which receives 1.2 million visitors annually, has an important role to play in combating anti-Semitism.

"We run a museum and we know how powerful the influence of this museum is," he said. "A visit ... really has a huge impact on young people and encourages them to fight discrimination, anti-Semitism, racism in their own communities."

The museum got a new entrance and changes to rooms including the darkened space that displays the iconic books that made up Anne's diary.

Indian police struggle to recover body of American from island

By TIM SULLIVAN
Associated Press

NEW DELHI — Indian authorities were struggling Thursday to figure out how to recover the body of an American killed after wading ashore on an isolated island cut off from the modern world.

John Allen Chau was killed last week by North Sentinel islanders who apparently shot him with arrows and then buried his body on the beach, police say.

But even officials don't travel to North Sentinel, where people live as their ancestors did thousands of years ago, and where outsiders are seen with suspicion and attacked.

"It's a difficult proposition," said Dependera Pathak, director-general of police on India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where North Sentinel is located. "We have to see what is possible, taking utmost care of the sensitivity of the group and the legal



SARAH PRINCE/AP

John Allen Chau, right, stands for a photograph in October with Ubuntu Football Academy founder Casey Prince in Cape Town, South Africa.

requirements."

Police are consulting anthropologists, tribal welfare experts and scholars to figure out a way to recover the body, he said.

While visits to the island are heavily restricted, Chau paid fishermen last week to take him near North Sentinel, using a kayak to paddle to shore and bringing gifts including a football and fish.

It was "a foolish adventure," said P.C. Joshi, an anthropology professor at Delhi University who has studied the islands. "He invited that aggression."

Joshi noted that the visit not only risked Chau's life but also the lives of islanders who have little resistance to many diseases.

"They are not immune to anything. A simple thing like flu can kill them," he said.

On his first day, Chau interacted with some tribesmen — who survive by hunting, fishing and collecting wild plants — until they became angry and shot an arrow at him.

The 26-year-old self-styled adventurer and Christian missionary then swam back to the fishermen's boat waiting at a safe

distance.

That night, he wrote about his visit and left his notes with the fishermen.

He returned to North Sentinel the next day, Nov. 16.

What happened then isn't known, but on the morning of the following day, the fishermen watched from the boat as tribesmen dragged Chau's body along the beach and buried his remains.

Pathak said seven people have been arrested for helping Chau, including five fishermen, a friend of Chau's and a local tourist guide.

Chau was apparently shot and killed by arrows, but the cause of death can't be confirmed until his body is recovered, Pathak said.

In an Instagram post, his family said it was mourning him as a "beloved son, brother, uncle and best friend to us."

The family also said it forgave his killers and called for the re-

lease of those who assisted him in his quest to reach the island.

"He ventured out on his own free will and his local contacts need not be persecuted for his own actions," the family said.

Chau had wanted ever since high school to go to North Sentinel to share Christianity with the indigenous people, said Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Covenant Journey, a program that takes college students on tours of Israel to affirm their Christian faith. Chau went through that program in 2015.

"He didn't go there for just adventure. I have no question it was to bring the gospel of Jesus to them," Staver said.

Staver said Chau's last notes to his family on Nov. 16 told them that they might think he was crazy but that he felt it was worth it and asked that they not be angry if he was killed.

WORLD

Dolce&Gabbana goods pulled in China over remarks



CHINATOPIC/AP

A woman walks out of a Dolce&Gabbana outlet in Shanghai, China, on Wednesday. The company claimed insulting remarks about China on Instagram were made by hackers.

Associated Press

BEIJING — Dolce&Gabbana goods disappeared Thursday from Chinese e-commerce sites as the fallout grew over remarks insulting to China that were apparently made by two of its Instagram accounts. The company has blamed hackers.

Searches for Dolce&Gabbana turned up no items on major online retailers such as Alibaba's Tmall and JD.com. Both companies didn't respond to requests for comment.

A duty-free shop at the Haikou Meilan airport on China's Hainan island posted a photo of empty shelves on its social media account, saying that it had pulled all Dolce&Gabbana products. It wrote in another post that "Even if our power is small, we have to

show our stance. We are proud of being Chinese."

The moves by retailers came one day after several screenshots were circulated online showing co-founder Stefano Gabbana referring to China with crude terms and emoji as he defended promotional videos that had sparked controversy earlier.

The comments were made in a private message exchange with another Instagram user. Separately, the Dolce&Gabbana account used offensive language in another exchange.

The Italian luxury fashion house apologized and said both accounts had been hacked. "We have nothing but respect for China and the people of China," it wrote.

The apology was too late to save

a major extravaganza in Shanghai that Dolce&Gabbana had billed as one of its biggest shows ever outside of Italy.

Major Chinese celebrities threatened to boycott the event, which had been scheduled for Wednesday night, and the company finally called it off. Actress Zhang Ziyi, who starred in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," said that the Italian brand had "disgraced itself."

The three promotional videos that led to the Instagram fiasco showed a Chinese woman using chopsticks to eat pizza and other Italian food. Many in China called them racist and full of outdated stereotypes. The videos were previously deleted from the company's account on Weibo, a Chinese version of Twitter.

Car driven into crowd of children in China

Associated Press

BEIJING — A car plowed into a crowd of children outside a primary school in northeastern China on Thursday, killing five people and injuring 18, a local government spokesman said.

The driver was taken into custody after the crash around noon in the coastal city of Huludao in Liaoning province, said the spokesman for Jianchang county in the city's suburbs, who declined to give his name as is standard with Chinese bureaucrats.

He described the crash as "a major traffic accident" and said the cause was under investigation.

State broadcaster CCTV reported all five dead and all but two of the injured were children.

Security camera footage showed a line of children crossing the street in front of their school when a car approaches, then changes lanes and swerves into the crowd of children.

It wasn't clear if the crash was a deliberate attack or whether the driver was swerving to avoid an obstacle.

Wang Mingkuan, a cook at a nearby noodle restaurant, said he was making meals when the crash occurred.

"I ran out and saw about a dozen children lying on the ground, some of them bleeding, all about 7 or 8 years old. Two or three showed no signs of life," Wang told The Associated Press by telephone.

Wang said that rumors about the driver included that he was drunk, fleeing police or had deliberately targeted the children.

Last month, a knife-wielding man drove a vehicle into a crowd of pedestrians in the eastern city of Ningbo, killing two people and injuring 16.

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SUBWAY
Catering



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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Video shows bears stealing chocolate bars

NC ASHEVILLE — A North Carolina teen caught a hungry bear and its three cubs on video breaking into her car to devour dozens of chocolate bars.

Lilly Thurmond, 16, provided WLOS-TV with cellphone video of the bears moving in and out of the Toyota Prius and eating about 50 bars meant for a school prom fundraiser. She and her mother told the station they believe the bears opened an unlocked door on the car in the driveway of their wooded lot in Asheville.

They said the furry bandits left the inside of the car dirty and punctured some backseat cushions, but insurance has agreed to pay for the damage.

Winner in sheriff's race declared by single vote

IL DECATUR — A winner was declared by a single vote in a central Illinois county sheriff's election.

The Macon County clerk's office Tuesday certified final results giving Democrat candidate Tony Brown 19,655 votes to Republican Jim Root's 19,654 votes.

Preliminary results on Election Night had given Root a 99-vote lead, but mail-in and provision ballots counted Tuesday favored Brown 191-91.

Brown and Root are both lieutenants in the sheriff's department. They were seeking to replace Howard Buffett, the son of billionaire investor Warren Buffett who became interim sheriff last year when the previous sheriff retired.

Statue of bison calf stolen from nature area

KS TOPEKA — Authorities said a statue of a bison calf was stolen from a popular nature area north of Topeka.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported that Doug Iliff reported the statue was broken off at the base and taken from the parking lot at Iliff Commons, a privately owned area that is open to the public. It has several miles of trails for walking, running, cross-country skiing and mountain biking. A replica of Topeka's original log cabin is situated on the trail. Iliff estimated the statue is worth about \$800.

Police: Teen stabbed classmate with pencil

MA BOSTON — A 15-year-old student at a Boston high school was charged with using a pencil to stab another student in the leg during a fight.

An officer assigned to Brighton High School responded to the fight in a hallway just before 11 a.m. Tuesday.

The injured student, also 15, was taken to the hospital with injuries not believed to be life-threatening.

Boston Public Schools is conducting its own investigation and says both students will be subject to disciplinary measures.

THE CENSUS

\$4,610

The amount a Bismarck man who vandalized multiple vehicles with eggs was ordered to pay in restitution. The Bismarck Tribune reported that Benedict Ponzer pleaded guilty this month to misdemeanor criminal mischief. He also was sentenced to 1½ years of probation and 60 hours of community service. Police said they received 20 reports of vehicles being egged June 18.



Trolling for a new home

Breckenridge, Colo., employees, above, dismantle "Isak Hearstone," a wooden troll built by artist Thomas Dambo during the Breckenridge Festival of the Arts in August. The troll, right, got so popular it caused complaints from nearby homeowners due to tourists visiting, and they demanded it be removed. The town set up a task force to find a new home for the 15-foot work.

PHOTOS BY HUGH CAREY, (FRISCO, COLO.) SUMMIT DAILY NEWS/AP



Missing portrait of female mayor returns

NM SANTA FE — The portrait of Santa Fe's only female mayor, which mysteriously disappeared two decades ago, is back at City Hall.

The Santa Fe New Mexican reported former Mayor Debbie Jaramillo's image returned to a wall of former mayors this week after years of a bizarre chain of events that had left no trace of Jaramillo's tenure.

Jaramillo had said she suspected her portrait had been stolen.

Man accused of faking own death arrested

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A man accused of faking his own death to collect a \$2 million life insurance policy was arrested in Moldova and returned to Minnesota to face federal charges.

Authorities indicted Igor Vorotnikov, 54, in 2015 on one count of mail fraud. He was arrested last week.

Prosecutors allege in court documents that in 2011, Vorotnikov's ex-wife, Irina, identified a corpse in Moldova as her ex-husband's. She then returned to the U.S. with a death certificate and cremated remains and received the life insurance payment. Money was then transferred to her son and to accounts in Switzerland and Moldova.

She pleaded guilty to her role and is serving a three-year sentence. A preliminary hearing for Igor Vorotnikov is scheduled next week.

ACLU to fight barring indecent vanity plates

RI PROVIDENCE — The American Civil Liberties plans to challenge a Rhode Island policy that bans vanity license plate applications deemed indecent.

ACLU Rhode Island Executive

Director Steven Brown told the Providence Journal the Division of Motor Vehicles is violating the First Amendment by rejecting license plates based on "what they see as in good taste."

A probe by the paper found that the agency has rejected 50 license plate applications since 2012. Rejected license plates include BONG and PPLSLUC.

State law gives the agency the authority to refuse a plate that "might carry connotations offensive to good taste and decency."

2 charged in caribou harassment, killing

AK ANCHORAGE — Alaska State Troopers said two teenage boys from Kotzebue illegally killed a caribou after chasing the animal on a snowmobile and ramming it several times.

The boys, aged 16 and 17, are facing charges including harass-

ment and taking a bull caribou during a closed season.

Wildlife Troopers started getting complaints Nov. 11 about a caribou being chased by a snowmobile on the ice near town. Callers told troopers the snowmobilers killed the animal after it fell.

Woman accused of abandoning dogs

ND BISMARCK — A Glenburn woman is accused of abandoning three dogs in a Bismarck apartment.

Authorities allege Leoda Fowler, 21, left the dogs in locked cages with no food or water for at least three days. They were found sitting in their own waste.

The Minor Daily News reported Fowler faces misdemeanor counts of animal neglect and animal abandonment that together carry a maximum punishment of six years in prison.

From wire reports

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BUSINESS/WEATHER

J.C. Penney piles up sales to dig out of 'abyss'

By HEMA PARMAR

Bloomberg

Walk into a J.C. Penney and it's a sea of red stickers. Almost everything is marked down, from apparel, jewelry and home goods to Christmas decor, bedding and appliances. And it's not even Black Friday yet.

Even for a retailer whose identity is built on promotions and discounts, there's an urgency to this holiday season. J.C. Penney Co.'s stocks are near record lows, its stock has slid toward a buck a share, and brand new Chief Executive Officer Jill Soltai is pushing her team to shovel out the dated goods that she says make the stores feel "over-assorted and heavy on inventory."

Cruising a single store — in this case, New York's Herald Square — it's easy to see Soltai's point. Racks are jammed with retro logo sweatshirts. Some of the womenswear skews to the frumpy side. And while someone may want leaves-and-berries dinner plates or toilet-shaped novelty coffee mugs, such merchandise hardly speaks to the modern shopper.

"They're trying to dig themselves out of the abyss," said Alex Arnold, a managing director of the consumer practice at invest-

ment bank Odeon Capital. "They are trying to turn out the bad products — they need to monetize that inventory and start putting capital into items that will work."

That abyss may be the fault of Soltai's predecessors, but it's hers to overcome since she was hired away from the Joann Stores fabrics-and-crafts chain in October. "I'm just beginning to spend a lot of time with the customer and customer data and understanding exactly what our customer wants and desires for us," Soltai told investors on a Nov. 15 earnings call.

While Dallas-based J.C. Penney is making progress on a plan to clear slow-moving inventory by the end of the fiscal year that starts in February, "we know we have more work ahead of us,"

J.C. Penney simply has too many apparel brands and too much product, said Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail. "Some brands, like Alfred Dunner and Adonna, are rather old-fashioned and are not particularly on-trend. There are also some home brands, like Eva Longoria, that need to be cleared out," he said.

J.C. Penney has to get this holiday season right or it could be one of its last Christmases, a former

CEO of rival Walmart Inc.'s U.S. operations told Fox Business in an interview Tuesday.

"They are sort of backed into a corner," without the financial strength to undergo transformations as Walmart and Target Corp. have done, Bill Simon said in the Fox interview. "Someone is going to gobble them up if they don't have a good Christmas."

The urgency shows in the run-up to this week's annual shopping frenzy.

The company recently offered early discounts to "Beat the Black Friday Rush," followed by the "Black Friday Warm Up." Deals for Black Friday itself went online starting Nov. 18, with the full selection of markdowns available on Nov. 21.

And for the first time, the chain will carry those bargains into Saturday for the "Black Friday Extended Sale." Then, the Cyber Monday sales kick off on Sunday.

The sales pitches, of course, aren't isolated to J.C. Penney. Black Friday discounts have been inching earlier and earlier across the industry as retailers try to capture shoppers' first dollars of holiday sales.

Still, J.C. Penney's push to scrap as much of its inventory as possible through bulk sales may

spell more pain in the short term and put additional pressure on margins.

The company's balance sheet shows that there's not a whole lot of time for patience. Even though J.C. Penney says it currently has about \$1.9 billion of liquidity, it's also facing lagging sales. The company is saddled with almost \$4 billion of debt, the majority of which comes due between now and 2025.

While management has said it's comfortable with the debt maturity profile, investors don't seem as sure.

Its first- and second-tion bonds fell to record lows after third-quarter earnings were released. The cost of insuring the retailer's debt also jumped to record highs after the earnings, signaling a 99 percent probability of default in the next five years. The retailer's shares have been on a largely unbroken slide since 2012 to \$1.29 as of Tuesday, after trading in the \$80 range more than a decade ago.

Still, if the chain can survive the short-term pain of essentially selling all its outdated inventory in a fire sale, the rewards could be big. Consumer confidence is high, median wages are on the rise and retailers — at least those

that don't go the way of recently bankrupt Sears Holdings Corp. — look poised for their best holiday season in years.

The company has said nothing is off the table. In addition to fixing inventory and merchandise problems, J.C. Penney needs to revamp its online efforts, an area where rivals have had success — even if it comes at a high price. E-commerce "is where the customer is today, and that's where we need to be," Soltai, who has three decades of industry experience, said.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Nov. 23)	\$1.1699
Dollar buys (Nov. 23)	€0.8548
British pound (Nov. 23)	\$1.31
Japanese yen (Nov. 23)	¥110.60
South Korean won (Nov. 22)	₩1,105.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769
British pound	\$1.2872
Canada (Dollar)	1.3228
China (Yuan)	6.9324
Denmark (Krone)	6.5432
Egypt (Pound)	17.9107
Euro	\$1.1404/0.8769
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8312
Hungary (Forint)	261.89
Israel (Shekel)	3.7348
Japan (Yen)	112.94
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3040
Norway (Krone)	8.5420
Philippines (Peso)	52.42
Poland (Zloty)	3.77
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7522
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3732
South Korea (Won)	1,129.74
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9948
Thailand (Baht)	33.00
Turkey (Lira)	2.2650

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issue. For Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, for nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	2.75
Federal funds market rate	2.00
3-month bill	2.34
30-year bond	3.31

EUROPE AIR PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.894	\$3.288	\$3.524	\$3.548
Change in price	-5.8 cents	-6.4 cents	-6.8 cents	-3.5 cents
Netherlands	---	\$3.490	\$3.684	\$3.942
Change in price	---	-2.2 cents	-6.8 cents	+0.1 cents
UK	---	\$3.222	\$3.456	\$3.482
Change in price	---	-6.4 cents	-6.8 cents	-3.5 cents
Azores	---	---	---	\$3.445
Change in price	---	---	---	-6.8 cents
Belgium	---	\$3.191	\$3.479	\$3.390
Change in price	---	No change	No change	No change
Turkey	---	---	\$3.453	\$3.365
Change in price	---	---	No change	-3.5 cents
Italy	\$4.202	---	---	\$4.278
Change in price	No change	---	---	No change

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	\$3.309	---	---	\$3.329
Change in price	-5.0 cents	---	---	-2.0 cents
Okhawa	\$2.659	---	---	\$3.329
Change in price	-6.0 cents	---	---	-2.0 cents
South Korea	\$2.699	---	\$3.349	\$3.369
Change in price	-6.0 cents	---	-5.0 cents	-2.0 cents
Guam	\$2.679**	\$3.089	\$3.329	---
Change in price	-7.0 cents	-6.0 cents	-6.0 cents	---

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of Nov. 24-30

MARKET WATCH

	Nov. 21, 2018
Dow Jones industrials	-0.95
	24,464.69
Nasdaq composite	63.43
	6,972.25
Standard & Poor's 500	8.04
	2,649.93
Russell 2000	19.27
	1,488.28

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

WEEKEND



Airplane bathrooms
get even smaller
Travel, Page 34



Hitting the right notes

The guy who directed 'Dumb and Dumber' tackles racism
and winds up making a pretty smart movie that just
might be a best picture nominee

Page 24

WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS



DANIEL ACKER/Bloomberg

BuzzFeed helping companies invent products for millennials

BY GERRY SMITH

Bloomberg

Scotts Miracle-Gro, the plant-care giant, had a problem: Millennials weren't gardening enough. So the company turned to one of the most renowned experts on millennial behavior, BuzzFeed. But Scotts didn't just advertise on the site, known for its viral quizzes and lists. Scotts worked with a more obscure part of BuzzFeed focused on inventing new product ideas.

The result was a subscription service for Scotts called Lunarly, which mails houseplants and wellness items based on the lunar calendar. Since launching in July, Lunarly has repeatedly sold out, bringing hope that the garden company can make inroads with younger consumers.

"BuzzFeed helped me build a better product and not just sell my product," said Patti Ziegler, vice president of global marketing at Marysville, Ohio-based Scotts.

The case highlights BuzzFeed's push to find new sources of revenue — an increasingly urgent mission as Facebook Inc. and Alphabet Inc.'s Google vacuum up ad dollars in the digital-media industry. BuzzFeed reportedly fell short of its \$350 million revenue target last year.

At the center of the commerce effort is a BuzzFeed executive named Ben Kaufman, a 32-year-old serial entrepreneur with a reputation for creating youth-friendly products.

For Scotts, Kaufman's team assembled some 40 experts — including engineers, a horticulturist and a Brooklyn woman who lives with 700 houseplants — for a weeklong brainstorming session in December at BuzzFeed's New York headquarters. The session was similar to "Shark Tank," with a panel of experts narrowing down a list of product ideas each day, according to Ziegler.

Kaufman's 65-person team has generated about \$50 million in sales this year from deals combining commerce and advertising, according to a person familiar with the matter. But it's hard to tell how big such a labor-intensive process can ultimately become for BuzzFeed.

Kaufman previously ran a startup called Quirky that brought people's invention ideas to market and cut deals with companies like General Electric Co., Mattel Inc. and Amazon.com Inc. But it ran out of venture capital funding and was forced to shut down.

BuzzFeed could use a boost. Two years ago, the company was valued at \$1.7 billion and its prospects seemed bright. But the digital-media industry has gotten tougher since then. The company laid off 100 people last fall and shut down its podcast team in September.

BuzzFeed could help inventing products can deepen ties with advertisers and capitalize on its audience data. The idea for Lunarly came after a BuzzFeed employee saw posts about mindfulness were popular on the website and a horticulturist noted that some plants only grow during certain times of year.

The idea is to turn the usual advertiser relationship on its head, Kaufman said in an interview.

"Companies make a thing, then tell media companies, 'Please tell the world about this,'" he said. "It should work in a more collaborative fashion. We should say, 'Here's what we think the world needs. Can you make this?' And go back and forth."

Typically, brands pay BuzzFeed to help develop a product and then agree to spend money advertising on its site. BuzzFeed might also take a cut of the sales.

For Maybelline, BuzzFeed came up with the "Fundle," a bundle of items for the beach, including a towel, lip balm and mascara. For Taste Beauty, BuzzFeed created "Glamspin," which serves as both lip gloss and a fidget-spinner toy.

In high school, Kaufman started an Apple accessory company called Mophie that was best known for the Mophie Juice Pack, which doubles as an iPhone case and battery. He sold the company in 2007 and spent the next decade launching various startups, including one that sold emoji-themed pool floats and another made scented "homesick candles" that smelled like the states people were from. (A candle for someone who just moved from Georgia smells like peaches, for example.)

GADGET WATCH

Stuff those stockings with electronics

BY GREGG ELLMAN ■ Tribune News Service

Now that we're past Thanksgiving, we can throw our efforts wholeheartedly into selecting just the right gifts for our loved ones. And who doesn't appreciate electronics?

Here is just a sampling of some of the must-have gifts of the 2018 holiday season.

The **Nixplay Iris frame** with Wi-Fi connectivity easily displays cellphone images. Along with the Nixplay app and 10GB of free cloud storage, you can send images from anywhere to be displayed in the 8-inch frame. Once setup is complete, images display instantly. The frame has a high resolution (1024 x 768) and automatically adjusts brightness based on ambient light levels in the surrounding room. Easy settings allow for choices of shuffling, playlists and image transitions. Both JPEG and PNG file formats are supported, and an AC power adapter is included.

Online: nixplay.com; \$199.99, in silver, copper or bronze



What coffee lover doesn't want an endless supply of java? You get that with the **WePenish Java Smart Container**. It's equipped with Amazon dash replenishment, so when your supply gets low, a Wi-Fi-connected smart sensor detects the coffee order needed and works through the WePenish App to automatically reorder your coffee. The container (10-by-5-by-9.75 inches) holds and reorders most all the popular coffee pods, including K-Cup and Nespresso.

Online: wepenish.com; \$39.99

Ventev's **Cablekeeper Stay** is so handy, you'll end up getting yourself a pack. Everyone has cables, so why not keep them neatly organized with this ultra compact cable management solution? Each four pack (one large multi-cable keeper and three single cable keepers) has non-marking adhesive to stay in place and allows your cables to snap in and out instantly. While you're at it, the Ventev Cablekeeper Tie (2-pack) is a magnetic closure that secures computer or headphone cables, keeping them tangle free.

Online: mobileaccessories.ventev.com; \$14.99



Imagine having 150 Bluetooth speakers and being able to pair and play them together. That's just one of the features of the **Megaboom 3** from Ultimate Ears, which has everything you would want from a Bluetooth speaker. This includes incredible 360-degree sound with an impressive amount of bass at all volumes. It's waterproof, and it even floats. A button on top of the speaker offers one-touch access to playlists from Apple Music and Deezer Premium. The battery will last for about 20 hours of play before a USB charge is needed, or you can purchase the Ultimate Ears Power Up charging dock (\$39.99) for wire-free charging. It also looks great with a high-performance fabric exterior available in seven colors.

Online: ultimateears.com; \$199.99

The **RCA Beverage Center** holds 24 wine bottles or 110 cans or a combination of both stored in perfect view with a double-tempered glass front door. Chrome racks are removable for easy cleaning and customized configurations. Interior blue LED lighting gives the product a modern look, and the electronic temperature control can be accessed from the outside.

Online: www.RCA.com; \$119

The **Kodak Scanz digital film scanner** is an easy way to revive memories without being tethered to a computer. The scanner converts 126, 110, super 8 and 8 mm, 35 mm film negatives and slides to JPEG files and puts scanned images directly onto an SD card.

Online: KodakPhotoPlus.com; \$169.99

The **Rabbit Charger Duohas** is a charging system for all your power-hungry accessories. It attaches to a standard AC duplex outlet (not compatible with GFCI or decor outlets) in seconds and includes a 28-inch retractable cable. The bottom of the charger has a standard AC pass-through plug, which you can use for another charger, lamp or whatever. Where the top plug would be is now a touch-activated ambient light. The top-sided cable has swappable charging tips for USB-C, Apple and Androids. With 3 amps of output, you can charge a tablet and a phone simultaneously.

Online: rabbitcharger.com; \$49.95



Rabbit Charger

ON THE COVER: Viggo Mortensen, left, and Mahershala Ali are an unlikely duo who grow to respect each other in "Green Book."

UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

1

4 new films to fill free time

It's another four first-run movie weekend, and Thanksgiving break makes a great time for multiple trips to the multiplex — or whatever passes for a theater in your town.

"Creed II" sees the return of Michael B. Jordan playing Adonis Creed, the son of Apollo Creed, who was killed by Ivan Drago (and then avenged by Rocky) in "Rocky IV." Now, in a very Shakespearean twist, Drago's son looks to atone for his dad's loss by fighting Adonis.

"Ralph Breaks the Internet" gives the kids, and those who love great Disney animation, a fun time as video game characters Ralph and Vanellope discover a Wi-Fi router in their arcade and follow it to bigger adventures.

"Green Book" is this week's Film With A Message. Helmed by "Dumb and Dumber" director Peter Farrelly (!!!), the movie stars Mahershala Ali and Viggo Mortensen as an unlikely duo traveling through the Jim Crow-era South.

The fourth option, "Robin Hood," stars Taron Egerton and updates the good-hearted robber for our times.

• **Movie reviews on Pages 25-26.**



2

Lorre, stars on Netflix in 'Kaminsky Method'

Chuck Lorre has had the golden touch on TV for years, creating hits such as "Two and a Half Men" and "The Big Bang Theory." He makes the leap to streaming content with "The Kominsky Method," about two friends (played by big-screen mainstays Michael Douglas and Alan Arkin) tackling life's inevitable curveballs as they navigate their later years in Los Angeles, a city that reveres youth and beauty. The new format frees Lorre from network-TV concerns about content and bad language, and shows that the sitcom master can work magic with a dramedy as well.

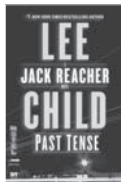
• **More about "Kominsky" on Page 39.**

3

Jack Reacher's back in Lee Child's latest novel

Author Lee Child has created an iconic hero with his fictional Jack Reacher, "a supersize human fighting machine who roams the United States with no particular purpose, carrying only a wad of cash and a toothbrush," according to reporter Elizabeth Vincentelli of Newsday. Child talks about Reacher's latest adventure, "Past Tense," and defends Reacher's seeming invincibility.

• **Q&A with Lee Child, Page 38.**



4

Brick Friday means free 'Lego Movie' online

Black Friday is so tedious. We've got weeks more to shop for the December holidays — why start so soon when we can laze around for another day and gorge on Thanksgiving leftovers? Instead, take advantage of YouTube's awesome opportunity. On Friday only, anyone checking out the trailer for "The LEGO Movie 2" can watch the original movie in its entirety. Just search for "Brick Friday" on YouTube and select the first promoted video for "The LEGO Movie 2." You can relive what the heroes of Bricksburg did five years ago before you see the sequel in February.

• **More information at thelegomovie.com.**

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Smart move

Peter Farrelly of 'Dumb and Dumber' fame helms intelligent period piece 'Green Book'

By ELAHE IZADI
The Washington Post

Peter Farrelly helped usher in a new era of raunchy and ridiculous comedies, the kind where idiots get their tongues stuck on icy poles and nervous teenagers endure painful prom-date catastrophes.

But now, the director and co-writer of "Dumb and Dumber" and "There's Something About Mary" has turned his through the Deep South for a tour. The movie takes its name from "The Negro Motorist Green Book," the popular travel guide that helped African-Americans travel during the Jim Crow era.

"It's definitely a departure from what I've done, but it wasn't like I thought at that point in my life, 'You know, I should do something different,'" co-writer and director Farrelly said. "By the way, I should have been thinking that way, but I didn't. It's just that the heavens gave it to me."

The heavens embodied by Brian Currie, that is.

In 2015, Nick Vallelonga told his long-time friend Currie the story of how his father was the driver for a world-renowned New York musician.

The record company had hired Tony Lip, the toughest bouncer at the Copacabana nightclub, to make sure Don Shirley, a black pianist, would safely make it to his concert gigs during a 1962 tour through the segregated South, where traveling was perilous for black Americans.

They decided to write a screenplay, and Currie soon told Farrelly, whom he had met while acting in his movies.

"He couldn't get it off his head," Currie recalled. "From then on, he just kept calling me, like, 'Brian, forget about everything else. ... Keep telling me about the Don Shirley and Tony Lip story.'"

Shirley was a musical prodigy with refined tastes who held several honorary degrees, and Lip was an Italian-American who lived in the Bronx and had prejudiced attitudes. "(Currie) said, they went on the road together, and it had happened, and they became friends," Farrelly recalled.

"I was like, really?! This guy, a black concert pianist, and the racist bouncer became friends? ... That's the thing that grabbed me."

Farrelly joined the writing team, and they pored over recorded interviews of Lip and Shirley (both men died in 2013). Later on, Ali was instrumental in offering changes to dialogue. "A genius is playing a genius," Currie said. "He took it upon himself to say, 'OK, this is how I feel Dr. Shirley would be.'"

Throughout the course of the characters' road trip, the audience sees the indignities of traveling while black. Filming took place in several locations actually recommended in the "The Negro Motorist Green Book," such as the motel where Motown acts would stay when performing in New Orleans.

Farrelly said he wasn't any more nervous making a drama dealing with such fraught themes than he was when he made comedies. "It's just a different story, but it didn't feel like starting over. It felt like a continuation of what I did," he said. "I entered this in the same state of anxiety, to make sure you're doing everything you can to make the movie as good as it can be."

It's not uncommon for comedy writers and directors to shift to drama and get critical acclaim (Adam McKay's "The Big Short" and Jordan Peele's "Get Out" both won Oscars), but the trend is especially prevalent recently: Jonah Hill's "Mid90s" and David Gordon Green's "Halloween" both came out this fall.

The movie industry has seen the decline of the kinds of hit summer comedies that used to be so commonplace when Farrelly and his brother Bobby helped reshape the genre (the successes of the comedies "Crazy Rich Asians" this year and "Girls Trip" in 2017 are more the exception now than the rule). These days, studios are putting out fewer comedies and more

superhero and sci-fi films.

And perhaps the sorts of features that characterized Farrelly Brothers comedies wouldn't fly today, in an era of intense scrutiny and rapid social-media controversies. Wouldn't the use of a fat suit in "Shallow Hal" face fierce blowback? What about Warren, the developmentally disabled character in "There's Something About Mary"?

Farrelly wonders. Some critics at the time pilloried them for the Warren character, but Farrelly said they received only positive fan mail about him, including from people who wrote that the movie inspired them to spend more time with relatives who have disabilities.

Any criticism "didn't bother us because we didn't believe it," Farrelly said. "In my heart, I knew it wasn't true, and just from the reaction we got from real people."

With Warren, "were there laughs around him? Sure. But he wasn't the laugh."

The Farrelly brothers also produced the 2005 comedy "The Ringer," featuring several actors with intellectual disabilities and starring Johnny Knoxville as a guy trying to rig the Special Olympics (which actively endorsed the movie).

"It's just those kind of things, yeah, it would be harder to do it today," he said. "The Special Olympics were on board when we did that movie; they were one of the producers. But they probably would have to think twice about it today, because of the criticism they'd get."

Although "Green Book" is decidedly a drama, there's humor laced throughout. That wasn't an element Farrelly set out to incorporate; in fact, he and his co-writers went out of their way not to add gags,

and instead focused on the odd-couple chemistry.

"There are no jokes in this. Anything that comes out of this is organic, character-driven — it's a thing between these two guys," Farrelly said. "On paper, this wasn't as funny as the movie turned out to be."

The nuanced performances of Mortensen and Ali "elevated it," Farrelly said. "They took little smiles and turned them into laughs."

Ali's Shirley serves as the straight man to Mortensen's Lip, getting laughs from a simple eyebrow raise or smirk.

It certainly helped that Lip had naturally funny tendencies, especially in his relationship with food. Mortensen eats on screen a lot; he gained 25 pounds before filming, and then another 20 during the seven-week shoot, a likely outcome after eating 15 hot dogs in a day and taking it upon himself to add real-life Tony Lip tics, such as folding an entire pizza in half and eating it like a sandwich.

It's a good thing the movie ended up having as many laughs as it did, the filmmakers said, because they make the film more accessible. They give breaks from the heavier scenes that show the dangers of traveling for black people in an era of "sundown towns," which banned African-Americans after dark.

"In the middle of [filming], we had a very diverse crew, and a lot of crew members would come forward, and they were moved by what was happening and seeing it, or angered in some ways by the scenes," Farrelly said.

Farrelly "never set out to make a message movie," he said, "but while we were making the movie, you start recognizing what you're doing here."



"It's definitely a departure from what I've done, but it wasn't like I thought at that point in my life, 'You know, I should do something different.' By the way, I should have been thinking that way, but I didn't. It's just that the heavens gave it to me."

In his foray into dramatic work as a feature director, Peter Farrelly helms "Green Book," starring Mahershala Ali and Viggo Mortensen. The film is inspired by a true friendship that transcended race, class and the 1962 Mason-Dixon line.

UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP



Peter Farrelly

on directing the historical drama "Green Book"

WEEKEND: MOVIES



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

A classical pianist (Mahershala Ali, left) and a New York bouncer (Viggo Mortensen) tour the Deep South in the 1960s in the comedy-drama "Green Book."

'Green Book' will make viewers laugh and cry

BY MICHAEL PHILLIPS
Chicago Tribune

Can two New Yorkers share a turquoise Cadillac on a tour of the Deep South without driving each other crazy?

Apologies to the opening credits of the TV sitcom "The Odd Couple," but that's the pertinent question in "Green Book," a different (yet familiar) odd-couple heartwarmer directed by Peter Farrelly of "Dumb and Dumber" and "There's Something About Mary" fame. A crowd-pleasing hit at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, the movie might not be accurate history. It might not even be particularly interesting in one of its two main characters, for various reasons.

But with actors as wily as Viggo Mortensen and Mahershala Ali, plus a ringer we'll get to a minute, the quality of the material matters less than usual.

In 1962, the African-American concert pianist and recording artist Don Shirley embarked on a concert tour of the Midwest and the South, chauffeured by Italian-American Tony Vallelonga. Better known as "Tony Lip" around the Bronx, and in the vicinity of the Copacabana nightclub where he worked as a bouncer, Shirley's record label hired Vallelonga as driver. In many towns the performer was legally barred from staying in hotels wide open to whites. The AAA-style "Negro Motorist Green Book," a guide to affordable lodging for black motorists traveling in institutionally segregated times, gives director Farrelly's cheerfully fictionalized account its title.

To play Tony Lip, Mortensen bulked up considerably. When he's behind the wheel of the '62 Caddy, it's like watching a big car driven by a slightly smaller one. Mortensen, not known for broad or even subtly comical (the movie favors the former), works hard at behaving like a semblance of a real person in a real place and time. Some of the details catch your eye, such as the

way he fishes a Lucky Strike out of a half-smoked pack while doing something else, or his method of folding an entire pizza into a handy wiseguy-sized bite.

The movie's Bronx sequences might not look or feel anything like anything within 500 miles of New York City (they shot the picture in New Orleans). But we're not in the land of realism here. Farrelly works well with actors, but Tony's friends and family skirt one sort of caricature, while the Dixie racists making the road tour difficult for Shirley and The Lip edge toward another.

"Green Book" relies almost entirely on the interplay between Mortensen and Ali. It's a car-based journey of discovery, begun on a note of mutual wariness, ending on an affirmative flourish of true friendship. The movie sets its chosen tone at the beginning, establishing Tony Lip's ingrained, casual-seeming prejudice with lingering close-ups of Mortensen throwing away drinking glasses used by a couple of African-American repairmen working in the family kitchen. The movie charts one lovable lug's enlightenment, while Shirley himself remains a remote, diffident enigma — the fastidious, uptight Felix to Mortensen's Oscar Madison.

The movie's lean toward Tony Lip and his universe is no surprise, given that the script comes from Nick Vallelonga (Tony's son), the director Farrelly and Brian Currie. On the other hand: The focus gives the fabulous Linda Cardellini (as Dolores, Tony's wife) some welcome screen time. The actress lends easy warmth and honestly earned sentiment to the Bronx scenes, and when she, Ali and Mortensen finally share a scene in the finale, hearts will warm and tears will flow. Director Farrelly knows a narrative gold mine when he sees one. And he knows enough to stay out of his actors' way.

"Green Book" is rated PG-13 for thematic content, language including racial epithets, smoking, some violence and suggestive material. Running time: 130 minutes.



METRO GOLDWYN MAYER PICTURES-WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Michael B. Jordan, left, stars in "Creed II," a sequel to the 2015 boxing drama. Co-starring Sylvester Stallone (not pictured).

'Creed II' is a knockout

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

The weight of legacy hangs heavily over "Creed II." Not just for most of the characters, who must come to grips with their own family histories. But also for the filmmakers, tasked with making a sequel to a successful spinoff of a beloved franchise. It would put any film on the ropes. Not this one.

"Creed II" pulls off a rather amazing feat by adding to the luster of its predecessor and propelling the narrative into a bright future while also reaching back to honor its past, resurrecting unfinished business from "Rocky IV" and adding a dash of "Rocky III." Pound per pound, the sequel might even be better than its predecessor.

Steven Caple Jr. replaced Ryan Coogler in the director's chair this time but there is plenty of continuity: Michael B. Jordan returns as Adonis Creed, with Sylvester Stallone by his side as former heavyweight champ and trainer Rocky Balboa. Also back: Tessa Thompson as Creed's love interest, Phyllis Rashad as Creed's mom, and Wood Harris as a coach. Max Kellerman is ringside again as color commentator.

The sequel pits Creed against man-mountain Viktor Drago, the son of Ivan Drago, who killed Adonis Creed's father, Apollo Creed, in the ring in "Rocky IV." That stirs up trauma for Rocky, who feels responsible for the elder Creed's demise. Rocky went on to avenge the death by beating the elder Drago, but we also now learn what that disgrace meant for the Dragos. This film is about ghosts as much as it is a meditation on fatherhood. At one point Kellerman says the showdown between the sons of Creed and Drago is almost like a Shakespearean drama and — laugh if you must — it feels sort of right here.

Desire — or lack of it — plays a key role in "Creed II" since we meet young Adonis as the new champion, at the top. Viktor Drago is at the bottom, hauling cement in Ukraine and burning cement for family redemption. "My elven will break your will," Ivan Drago threatens Rocky, who sort of agrees. "When a fighter's got nothing to lose he's dangerous," he warns Creed. "Listen, that kid was raised in hate. You weren't."

Dolph Lundgren returns as the elder Drago and there's even an appearance by Brigitte Nielsen,

who plays Drago's wife in 1985 and was a real-life wife of Stallone. (Talk about keeping it in the family.)

Caple matches Coogler's moody, gritty vision of a brutal sport conducted by mostly honorable men trying to outwit each other. There's plenty of gore, slo-mo of smashed heads and "Rocky" trademarks — the glorious montages with uplifting music as fighters prepare for their shot in the ring. (Prepare to look away if you are fans of massive truck tires — many get horrible beat downs.)

Stallone got his mitts on the script — after having had a role pawning all the "Rocky" assets but sitting out writing "Creed" — and teams up with Cheo Hodari Coker, creator of the Netflix superhero hit "Luke Cage." On-screen, Stallone returns with his dark fedora and small bouncing ball, shuffling about and mumbling, allowing his sad eyes to do the bulk of his acting. It's in the small moments between crusty Stallone and cocky Jordan where the film finds its sweet spot.

"What are you fightin' for?" the elder man asks the younger.

Jordan proves again that he's a film force to be reckoned with, capable of searing and savage intensity and yet also goofy softness. This time, his swagger is tested and he must overcome intense pain and anguish. Watching him get up off the canvas again and again will make even the most uncharitable viewer cheer.

Thompson and Rashad both temper the piles of testosterone onscreen as women who steer and guide the young Adonis.

Thompson's character is battling progressive hearing loss and that is handled intelligently by the writers. There's even a scene when Adonis is punched so hard that he falls in silence and looks over at her, both connected for a moment in enveloping quiet.

The film's characters, meanwhile, are creating their own family legacy. Both "Creed" films share the same composer (Ludwig Goransson) art director (Jesse Rosenthal), special effects coordinator (Patrick White), costume designer (Laurie Ann), and production manager (Patricia Taggart). The films even have the same barber for Jordan (Kenny Duncan). And Coogler didn't go far — he's an executive producer.

"Creed II" is rated PG-13 for sports action violence, language and a scene of sensuality. Running time: 128 minutes.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



"Ralph Breaks the Internet" is an animated sequel about the adventures of a frustrated video game character (John C. Reilly).

DISNEY/AP

'Ralph Breaks the Internet'

A savvy, fresh look at life on the web

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

Wreck-It Ralph" felt like a real breath of fresh air. Using '80s arcade game characters, co-writer and director Rich Moore explored the nuances of heroism and villainy through the surprisingly self-aware video game bad guy Wreck-It Ralph (John C. Reilly), exposing the limitations of the good/evil binary. It was self-reflective, and not afraid to pillory genre formulas, which Disney has been known to employ a time or two. Moore is back to helm the sequel, "Ralph Breaks the Internet," along with co-director Phil Johnston, who co-wrote the original film. Once again, the team brings a razor-sharp scalpel to dissect the zeitgeist.

Although Ralph is perfectly happy with his life hanging with his best pal in the arcade, racer Vanellope (Sarah Silverman) is bored, and nothing fixes boredom like a high-speed Wi-Fi connection. After running roughshod over Sugar Rush, Ralph and Vanellope hit the web to snag a new steering wheel for the console from an eBay auction. Along the way, they discover the risks of online shopping, viral fame, pop-up ads, the dark web and a truly addictive adult racing game in the style of "Grand Theft Auto" called "Slaughter Race." Headed up by the very cool Shank (Gal Gadot), it's love at first engine rev for Van, and a cause for concern for Ralph, who doesn't want to lose his best pal.

So while Vanellope follows her heart to the thrills of "Slaughter Race," Ralph

does everything he can to right things in the arcade, which means winning the eBay auction. He becomes a viral video star, doing his best video impressions—makeup tutorials, hot peppers, screaming goats, you name it. The whole film is quite a savvy analysis of how the web works, and it's cleverly rendered visually. The characters zip around the internet in little flying cars, make queries at a Search Bar headed up by a puppy know-it-all Knows-More (Alan Tudyk), and Ralph vacuums up hearts he turns into cold hard cash.

Vanellope realizes her real dream is to stay in "Slaughter Race," as it's what she sings about while staring at "important water," as the princesses instruct. Ralph, who has become totally co-dependent with Vanellope, panics at the development.

There's no real villain in the film — Ralph's own worst enemy is Ralph himself. His insecurity is cloned by a virus, and his worst, neediest qualities swarm into a giant King Kong monster. Vanellope and Ralph's most important survival quest is learning to set boundaries and not rely on each other's validation, and it's pretty incredible to see how the filmmakers easily and boldly slip concepts right from the therapist's office into the wild rumpus through the internet.

"Ralph Breaks the Internet" is a fresh, smart, funny and, most importantly, comprehensible analysis of both internet culture and the complexities of interpersonal relationships.

"Ralph Breaks the Internet" is rated PG for some action and rude humor. Running time: 112 minutes.

'Robin Hood' brings a whole new dimension to age-old tale

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

Every generation gets the Robin Hood it deserves, and the 2018 "Robin Hood" is sleek, modern and retrofitted for a radical political landscape. Take in that Shepard Fairey-inspired wanted poster, the woodcut-style closing credits sequence rendered in Constructivist shades of red and black, our masked, hooded hero hurling Molotov cocktails, and you just might wonder: "Is Robin Hood anti-far?"

But Robin Hood has always been anti-fascist, robbing from the rich and giving to the poor, living with his pals in Sherwood Forest while battling against the tyrannical Sheriff of Nottingham and disrupting abusive systems of power. He's the very definition of a radical leftist activist. The new iteration maintains the medieval setting while bringing the classic story to a contempo-



Taron Egerton stars in "Robin Hood," an action-packed take on the classic story.

LIONSGATE/TNS

rary thematic landscape, using a street art aesthetic and early Soviet cinematic references to position the landed lord of Loxley as a proletarian hero.

Played by the beguiling Welsh actor Taron Egerton, this Robin Hood is younger than most actors who have taken the hood, suited in trim quilted leather and mini-

malist robes, sporting a clean, sharp 'do. He also has a traumatic backstory, having been conscripted to fight in the Crusades, taken from his land and love, Marian (Eve Hewson). The holy war also gets the modern treatment, as soldiers engage in guerrilla street warfare against their enemies. There are no pitched battles in

sight — this looks more like the cinematic depictions of Operation Iraqi Freedom, but with bows and arrows.

It's in battle that Robin meets his best ally, who starts as an enemy. Jamie Foxx plays a Moor warrior who stows away to England to enact revenge for his son's death, and engages Robin to help him do it. He lets Robin call him John and trains the young lord to infiltrate the inner circle of the Sheriff (Ben Mendelsohn) while robbing the coffers blind, disguised as The Hood. The idea is to take the whole enterprise down from the inside, choking off the church's funding of the war earned through brutal taxation. There's even a fun little Reagan-era Iran-Contra twist to that, too.

The first time Robin Hood appeared on film was 110 years ago. The tale necessarily requires a thorough overhaul. Writers Ben Chandler and David James Kelly hew to the original

lore while drawing out the parts of the character's story that make him the most sympathetic, while director Otto Bathurst gives the project a visual makeover and a jolt of adrenaline. Foxx also enlivens the proceedings, especially in the first half of the film, during the rapid-fire training montages. His breathless enthusiasm for vengeance is far more compelling than the mooning over his ex Marian that drives Robin to action.

The second half of the film loses the energy as John fades to the background while Robin, Marian and a love rival, Will (Jamie Dornan), struggle for control of a jumbled uprising.

While it plays fast and loose with loaded political iconography, this visually striking "Robin Hood" has brought a whole new dimension to this age-old tale.

"Robin Hood" is rated PG-13 for extended sequences of violence and action, and some suggestive references. Running time: 116 minutes.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

Landstuhl
LANDMARK

Nanstein Castle is worth a visit, even for most jaded sightseers

By WILL MORRIS
Stars and Stripes

Maybe I'm a little jaded, but like many others who have moved around a lot, I have a tendency to ignore all but the biggest tourist attractions in my backyard, wherever that backyard may be. I usually want to see the big stuff — like the the Pyramids at Giza.

But what do you do if you live in the German Ozarks and not Cairo? What if you have only a few hours to kill between an ethics presentation and a SHARP briefing? The answer is simple ... go to the ruins of Nanstein Castle in Landstuhl.

Despite its small size, Nanstein Castle has almost all the things the 9-year-old still secretly living inside you is looking for in a castle, excluding Princess Buttercup, a fire-breathing dragon and a moat. Ramparts? Check. Battlements? Check. Watchtowers? Check. Castle keep? Check. Dungeon? Check. Crawling all over the castle grounds is great fun, and in a brief trip there you can really get an idea of the conditions in which soldiers in the Middle Ages lived and fought.

Nanstein has a long and storied history with the strategic overlook having been used as a military site possibly as far back as 1162. For hundreds of years, the castle changed hands until in 1482, ownership passed to the aristocratic von Sickingen family.

Franz von Sickingen, a medieval warlord — a cross between a mercenary and a knight — occupied the castle in 1518. Von Sickingen is a seminal figure in German medieval history and his influence was felt across Europe. He commanded a large army and would readily enter the fray between warring groups in the region and farther afield if he saw an opportunity for profit.

He immediately began improving the castle. He shored up the walls and ramparts and built two massive turrets from which cannons could be fired. In the summer of 1522 when the improvements were complete, Von Sickingen became infuriated by the rise of German city-states and the introduction of laws that weakened feudalism. He decided to do what any self-respecting warlord would do — kidnap an archbishop for ransom money.

Known as the Knight's Revolt, Von Sickingen attacked Trier, but he horribly misjudged both the tactical and political situations and the siege failed.

In late April 1523, Von Sickingen found himself at Nanstein hemmed in by the armies of competing knights, at the business end of several siege cannons. It took just a few hours for the guns to pound the head bastion into oblivion. Von Sickingen surrendered and on May 7, 1523, died from wounds received in the barrage.

Scattered throughout the castle site to this day among demolished walls are stone cannon balls, much like the ones used to batter Von Sickingen into submission.

Nanstein, in addition to having ruins, has several biking and hiking trails. They come together at the site and wind for miles through the surrounding forest. It's an easy rally point for adventures in the woods.

If, after hiking through the woods and exploring the intricacies of medieval military architecture leaves you hungry, then Nanstein has a small, cozy restaurant known as the Burgschaenke that serves homestyle German food at reasonable prices. Most items average 8 euros (\$9.13), and the most expensive dish is 19.50 euros. Make sure to get a seat next to the fireplace.

morris.william@stripes.com
Twitter: willatstripes

Crumbling walls are all that remain in parts of Nanstein Castle. In other parts of the castle, large underground rooms built out of hand-hewn stone still stand. The castle, which is located in Landstuhl, Germany, was bombarded at least twice with siege cannons.

PHOTOS BY WILL MORRIS/Stars and Stripes



ON THE QT

LOCATION

Address: Burg Nanstein Kaiser
Strasse 49, 66849 Landstuhl,
Germany

TIMES

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays, January-March. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays, April-September. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays, October-November. Closed on Monday except for public holidays. Closed for the month of December.

COSTS

4 euros (\$4.56) with discounts for students and seniors.

FOOD

Burgschaenke, a cozy restaurant in Nanstein, serves homestyle German food at reasonable prices. Most items average 8 euros (\$9.13), the most expensive dish is 19.50 euros.

INFORMATION

Phone (+49) (0)6371/1300012,
email: tourismus@vglandstuhl.de, website: www.landstuhl.de

— Will Morris

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

German cuisine: A treat for discerning travelers

Eating in Germany is a big part of the fun of traveling there. Ingredients are wonderful (especially if you eat with the season), traditions are prized, "modern German cuisine" is giving old dishes tasty and entertaining new twists, and small, creative foodie places are thriving in every city. And here's even more good news: Eating well in Germany is an amazing value — cheaper than in France, Britain, Italy or Scandinavia.

Get ready for surprises on the menu. Even in small-town Germany, restaurants are challenging the notion that German food is all schnitzel and noodles. An influx of immigrants, a new generation with more adventurous tastes and a desire for healthier options means the German food scene is more than meat and potatoes.

Of course, you'll still find a healthy dose of meat-heavy menus. The classic dish in Germany is sausage. It's a fast, tasty staple of the Germanic diet. Most restaurants offer it (often as the cheapest thing on the menu), but it's more commonly eaten at takeout fast-food stands. You might even see portable human hot dog stands — cooks in clever harnesses that let them grill and sell hot dogs while standing under an umbrella.

Many traditional eatables also serve some kind of meat on the bone, such as pork knuckle or shoulder, which has been boiled or roasted until tender. It goes down well with a big mug of beer. Another popular meat dish is schnitzel (a meat cutlet that's been pounded flat, breaded and fried). And you'll often see stuck on the beginning and end of menu items a form of the word braten (which can

mean "roast" or "grill" or "fry") — as in Bratkartoffeln (pan-fried potatoes), Schweinebraten (roasted pork) or bratwurst (grilled sausage).

Each region of Germany has its specialties, and smart travelers know that the best values are generally the local favorites. In the west, where Germany



Rick Steves

shoulders up to France, look for the Alsatian Flammkuchen, a version of white pizza, on a thin, yeastless dough; the classic version is topped with bacon and onions. In the east, where Germany neighbors Poland and

the Czech Republic, you'll find Koenigsberger Kloppe, meatballs with capers and potatoes in a white sauce, and Senfeier, hard-boiled eggs in mustard sauce served with potatoes. Up north in Berlin, Stolzer Heinrich (grilled sausage in beer sauce) and currywurst (basically grilled pork sausage smothered with curry sauce) reign supreme.

Though it's tasty, traditional German food can get monotonous. All schnitzelized out? Thankfully, Germans are health-conscious and quite passionate about choosing organic (bio) products: bio fruits and vegetables, and even bio bread, ice cream and schnitzel.

Germans make excellent salads (and not just of the potato variety). Most menus feature big, varied, dinner-size salad plates. You'll likely come across options



ROSIE LEUTZINGER/Ricksteves.com

Germany now has its share of haute-cuisine restaurants, even in small towns — such as the Rhine Valley's tiny Bacharach.

ranging from Greek salads and bean salads to gemischter Salat — a mixed salad of lettuce, fresh (and often) pickled veggies and a tasty dressing. In May and June, spargel — big white asparagus — is ubiquitous.

The trend toward variety is particularly noticeable in Berlin, which hosts a world of ever-changing restaurants. As one of Europe's primary melting pots, Berlin makes it easy to find sushi, Peruvian, Cuban, Thai, Georgian, Indian, Argentine-

and lots of Vietnamese cuisine.

Ethnic restaurants provide a welcome break all over Germany, and they're generally good value. A freshly baked pizza, a Turkish sandwich or a rice or noodle dish will cost you \$5–\$8, and can be packed up to enjoy on a park bench.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Illuminated winter wanderings

If the commercial aspects of Christmas markets start to feel a little overwhelming, it might be time to embark along a festively lit path winding through clever illuminations intertwined with pure forms of nature or the urban landscape. Here are a few places to enjoy a winter wonder:

Amsterdam: boat, bike or hike along the trail of the Amsterdam Light Festival, an ambitious holiday undertaking in which some 30 light sculptures created by artists from Holland and 15 other countries grace the city's historic Canal Ring, Amstel river and other landmarks. Visitors can opt to take in the sights at their own pace or have a local guide point out the highlights on walking or cycling tours. The Water Colors canal cruises, in which passengers get up close to the major artworks from a watery perspective, are another highlight. Those in town through Christmas can burn off the excesses of the holidays by taking part in a 10- or 15-km guided walking tour on Dec. 27; participation costs 13/17 euros and must be booked in advance. The festival runs Nov. 29–Jan. 20. Online: amsterdamlightfestival.com/en

Edinburgh: Through Dec. 29, the Royal Botanic Garden is the setting for "Christmas at the Botanic," an outdoor trail designed to dazzle with more



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

than one million twinkling lights forming oversize, incandescent flowers, bead-draped trees, frosty snowflakes and the hidden figures of marching reindeer and gingerbread men. Explore the Cathedral of Light, scented Fire Garden and projections on and around Inverleith House. Advance purchase ticket prices begin at 14 pounds (\$18.20) for adults and 8 pounds for children. Online: rbe.org.uk/whats-on/christmas-at-the-botanic

A second option is offered at the Edinburgh Zoo, the site of a show titled "Giant Lanterns of China - Myths and Legends." Through Feb. 17, Scottish myths, Chinese legends and fantastic beasts are brought to life by means of more than 450 painstakingly crafted lanterns. Visitors will encounter unicorns, giants and even the Loch Ness Monster along a mile route that takes around 1.5 hours to

complete. Short performances by Chinese artists and a Chinese artists' market complete the offerings. The zoo animals themselves are not part of the attractions here. Adult tickets cost 20 pounds; children's entry costs 9.95 pounds and 3 and under enter free. Online: edinburghzoo.org.uk

London: a hit since its debut six years ago, Christmas at Kew brings the botanical gardens to life with more than a million twinkling lights and thousands of laser beams. Tree canopies shimmer in Christmas colors, laser beams play tag in a moonlit forest, campfires flicker and crackle in a sculptural fire garden, and a flotilla made up of hundreds of glowing boats bobs on a lake. Children can take a turn on the vintage fairground rides while they keep an eye out for Santa and his elves. The lights stay on through Jan. 5. Adult online ticket prices start at 16.50 pounds, ages 4–16 pay 10 pounds, and those 3 and under enter free. Online: kew.org/kew-gardens/whats-on/christmas-at-kew

Metz, France: A path alongside the Mosel River takes visitors on a metaphorical journey past the Arctic Circle and into the realm of Pere Noel, where his workshop is in high gear and the reindeer roam free. With the aid of a smartphone app, walkers of all ages can embark on a treasure hunt. "Le Sentier des Lanterns" awaits discovery through Dec. 30. Online: noelmetz.com/full-thumbnail-right-side-bar/



Courtesy of Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh

The Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, Scotland, includes walk-through displays such as the Cathedral of Light, a 230-foot walkway festooned with more than 100,000 pea-lights.

night. Visit on selected dates until Jan. 1. Advance tickets go for 16.50 pounds adults, 10.50 pounds children, and it's free for those 3 and under. Online: christmasatlonondonzoo.co.uk

Metz, France: A path alongside the Mosel River takes visitors on a metaphorical journey past the Arctic Circle and into the realm of Pere Noel, where his workshop is in high gear and the reindeer roam free. With the aid of a smartphone app, walkers of all ages can embark on a treasure hunt. "Le Sentier des Lanterns" awaits discovery through Dec. 30. Online: noelmetz.com/full-thumbnail-right-side-bar/

Alpine ski season kicks off in earnest

The legendary Top of the Mountain concert is coming once again to the ski resort of Ischgl, Austria. Opening the 2018/2019 ski season this year is American R&B singer and songwriter Jason Derulo. He'll perform at 6 p.m. Nov. 24. The cost of a pass good for both a day's worth of skiing plus concert entry goes for 65 euros adults and 40 euros for children.

Lenny Kravitz is scheduled to close the season on April 30. Online: ischgl.com/en/Events/Top-Events

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe

After Hours: Germany

By GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

Before we consider the debut of Kaiserslautern's newest burger restaurant, Sissi und Franz, let's take a moment to remember what once was.

The McDonald's restaurant on the corner of Eisenbahnstrasse and Marktstrasse was nothing less than a civic institution before its sudden and recent closure. The palatial two-story location loomed over its corner of downtown, luring customers in from the steady flows of pedestrian foot traffic and one-way vehicle traffic that crisscrossed its storefront.

Cozy diners sipping fries and sipping straws behind the second-floor glass looked positively aspirational to the less-fortunate souls beating their feet, pushing their pedals and gripping their wheels below, particularly when the weather turned cold. It stung when this majestic outlet of the Golden Arches was reduced to plywood and scaffolding.

It's into this semi-sacred space that Sissi und Franz has launched its own brand of burger establishment. McDonald's has found mixed results in recent years with its efforts to modernize its restaurants with sleeker dining rooms, gourmet menu options and an emphasis on expensive coffees. While the world's largest burger chain is merely adopting that kind of haughty pretentiousness, Sissi und Franz was born into it, molded by it; the place dabbles with an Alpine ski lodge theme that is not fully realized, is named after old Austrian royalty, is unabashed about charging 8 euros for a milkshake and says something called detox water with stuff like raspberries and basil sloshing about.

This all clashes with my own purist sensibilities, developed over years of eating burgers and announcing immediate and reactionary opinions, solicited or otherwise, on same. I'm happiest with a burger wrapped in foil or paper and shoved across a counter either on a plastic tray or in a greasy paper bag. A burger served with too much flair or presentation strikes me as manipulative. It's lipstick on a cow.

Sissi und Franz's take on milkshakes furthered this impression. These desserts are served piled with all kinds of whimsical treats — doughnuts, gummies, popcorn, pretzels, chocolate sauce caked on the sides, etc. — but the shake underpinning all that is a little thin. While it made for a cool photo, I'd have preferred a more substantial vanilla shake with nothing protruding from it but a straw. I'm a bit embarrassed to say that my sweet tooth was not satisfied by a milkshake with a doughnut on top, but I am nonetheless saying just that.



Sissi und Franz, a new burger eatery in downtown Kaiserslautern, occupies the location of the former two-story McDonald's that was a signature feature of the city's pedestrian zone.

SISSI UND FRANZ

LOCATION: Schneiderstrasse 15, Kaiserslautern

HOURS: Open daily at 11 a.m.; closes at 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday and midnight all other nights.

DRESS: Casual

PRICES: Burgers start at 7.45 euros (\$8.38); fries start at 3.45. A lunch combo special adds fries and a detox water or lemonade for the price of the burger plus 3.95 euros. Milkshakes start at 7.95 euros; waffles, cheesecakes and other desserts start at 2.95 euros.

INFORMATION: Visit the restaurant's website at www.sissiundfranz.eu/kaiserslautern, email kaiserslautern@sissiundfranz.eu or call (49) 631-350 99907.

— Gregory Broome

I'll admit that it's possible my emotional entanglements are such that no successor could live up to my idealized memories of the fallen McDonald's. It's not the fault of Sissi und Franz that their building makes me melancholy. I just wish I'd liked the new eatery enough to begin the healing process.

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PHOTOS BY GREGORY BROOME/Stars and Stripes

A milkshake named the Ludwigshoehe is served at Sissi und Franz restaurant in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The shake, featuring popcorn, pretzels and a doughnut, is one of the eatery's many decadent desserts. Milkshakes start at 7.95 euros.



A bacon cheeseburger known as the Joseph is presented along with a side of fries and an Orange Berry detox water at Sissi und Franz. The restaurant offers a lunch special that adds fries and a specialty drink for 3.95 euros to accompany a burger.

New, easy-to-peel avocado promises fewer hand injuries

By MAURA JUDKIS
The Washington Post

Of all the dangers that lurk in our kitchens, avocados might be the most quietly sinister. The green-fleshed fruit of Instagram-perfect avocado toast and party platters of guacamole has caused so many injuries that it even has an ailment named after it: Avocado hand. That's what happens when you try to dig out an avocado pit with a sharp knife and end up slicing your palm instead.

But the British grocery chain Tesco is trying to combat this epidemic. The brand has introduced an easy-peel avocado, with "a thicker and corkier consistency to its skin," which the company says should help with "one of the messiest and potentially dangerous kitchen chores," according to a news release. The EasyAvo, as it's called, is a naturally developed hybrid grown in South Africa. It costs the equivalent of \$2.50, more than double a conventional avocado at the chain. It went on sale this fall. Westfalia Fruit, the company that grows it, said the product is not yet available in the United States.

You might laugh at avocado hand — es-

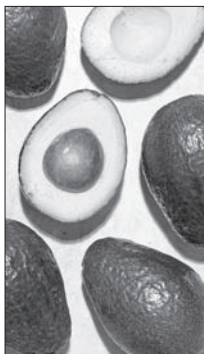
pecially because avocados have become a sort of catchall scapegoat for millennial and upper-middle-class derision — but it really is a problem. According to the Chicago Tribune, avocado consumption has increased by 250 percent since 2002. There aren't reliable statistics on how many Americans have been injured cutting an avocado, but emergency rooms report that it is becoming more frequent. In New Zealand, an average of 100 people a year who have cut themselves while handling an avocado request compensation from a government fund for injuries. The British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons called for safety labels on the fruit. One London doctor said he was treating four patients a week for avocado-related injuries.

"I see it fairly frequently," Scott Drenden of Northwestern University's Department of Emergency Medicine told the Tribune. "Patients try to stab the pit, the knife slips off the pit and they stab the hand. Or patients do a sort of hacking motion with the long blade of a knife into the pit, and hack into the webbing between the thumb and the forefinger instead."

But that's the problem with these new avocados: It's not the skin that's causing injuries, it's the pit. It's unclear how an easier-to-peel skin would prevent injuries — it could possibly make the avocado even more slippery, leading to more lacerations.

Tesco is not the only company that has tried to address the growing scourge of avocado hand. Dozens of kitchen goods companies make avocado slicers, but they've been met with derision from Bon Appetit and chefs. A group of British schoolchildren invented a device called the "Avogo," a hooked blade that extracts the pit. And NPR reports that Marks & Spencer, another British chain, has introduced the cocktail avocado, a small avocado grown with no pit. It tastes just like a regular avocado; even the peel is edible, but that report reportedly doesn't taste very good. The only problem is that they are grown only in Spain and available only in December.

If you're scared of avocado hand, remember: Always cut against a flat surface, not with the fruit in your palm. Want a tutorial on how to do it the safe way? Look here. wapo.st/2R0P247



STACY ZARIN GOLDBERG
For The Washington Post

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Haunted by our memories

Ghosts can come in many forms in Ireland, but none are more personal than those you bring with you

By MARY McNAMARA
Los Angeles Times

Ireland is a proudly haunted island, its landscape defined by ancient castles and standing stones, by ruined abbeys, castles and cottages.

The spectral comes in many famous forms: the ladies — the White Lady of Kinsale (who threw herself off the walls of Charles Fort after her husband was shot); the Waiting Lady of Ardgillan Castle (on vigil for her rowed husband); the Faceless Lady of Belyvelly Castle (survived a siege but went insane upon discovering she was no longer beautiful) — the incarcerated (Cork District Lunatic Asylum, the Wicklow Jail); and the casualties of war (the Jacobites of the Battle of Aughrim and King James II who is said to haunt Athcarne Castle six miles from where he died in the Battle of the Boyne).

If you are looking, there are plenty of ghosts to be found in Ireland.

Or you can do what we did and just bring them with you.

My family and I traveled to Ireland in June 2017 to scatter my parents' ashes at Downpatrick Head in County Mayo. We knew the exact spot because Mom and Dad, who spent many of their post-retirement summers in the land of our ancestors, had brought us here almost 20 years ago.

Downpatrick Head is one of the world's more dramatic edges, where the wildflower-studded grass runs in sweet green benevolence until it hits the wild wind and a 140-foot drop onto black rocks and white foam.

We have pictures of my then-1-year-old son Danny sitting in the grass picking daisies while my parents showed my brother, Jay, where they wanted their ashes to go: right in view of the towering sea stack called Dun Briste (Broken Fort) and a few yards from a blow hole where, my father informed us, British soldiers had thrown local villagers during the 1798 Irish Rebellion.

So not, you know, Rose Hills cemetery back home.

For a year or two, Downpatrick Head was something of a family joke. We would not make that crazy drive to that crazy cliff, but if we did, we would pitch the ashes down the blowhole. Then far too soon, it wasn't.

My dad died four years after that trip; when we offered to take Mom and the ashes to Ireland, she said she wanted to wait and be scattered along with him. When she died a few years later, neither my brother nor I had the heart to make the journey.

For years.

After that once-upon-a-time 1-year-old went away to college, my brother and I realized we had to get moving, busy schedules and mixed feelings be damned.

My husband, Richard, Danny and his sisters Fiona and Darby, and I flew to Dublin a few days before Jay and his husband, Franco. After what I can only hope was our very last argument to end with "Well, you're the oldest," Jay persuaded me to carry the cremains.

It was a bit unsettling to travel with your parents' ashes. My mom was always fashion conscious, so I had to find a stylish carry-on, but it was still disconcerting to shove it in the overhead.

In Dublin, we stayed in a lovely flat near the General Post Office, which now houses an excellent museum devoted to the 1916 Easter Rising. We put the bag in a nice alcove where I could nod to them as we came and went.

An 'atmosphere'

It wasn't until we got to the castle that the haunting began.

Jay had decided that we needed to rent a castle. He showed me a few from which to choose, and we both loved Turin Castle, a glorious restored keep in County Mayo near the towns of Ballinrobe and Cong (where "The Quiet Man" was filmed). It slept 12, with five bedrooms and five bathrooms. We were seven, so for once there were no arguments about bedrooms and no waiting for a free bathroom.

Turin Castle rose square and solid from bright green fields at the end of a drive that was easy to miss, in part

because it was preceded by at least two turns on unnamed lanes. It has been gorgeously restored, which is not to say renovated. The amenities were modern (and flawless), but the layout was true to history.

All the rooms were accessed by a stone spiral staircase that began on the ground floor, where the doorways were small enough to make male invaders stoop so the current residents could cut off their heads.

Along a series of landings were other bedrooms, bathrooms and the kitchen, which was connected to a breathtaking great room with a fireplace you could stand in and a table that can only be described as "baronial." (Which it is, in the video on the castle's website.)

Jay and Franco arrived at the castle several hours after we did, through the mist at dusk, and Franco immediately informed the kids that he felt a definite "atmosphere." "It better have atmosphere," my jet-lagged brother grumbled, "it's an Irish castle."

We have a few ghost stories from our travels — Jay and Franco once stayed in a Parisian hotel with a sorrowing female presence that they felt but never saw — and Ireland is full of places where a ghostly child or a cowed figure would make perfect sense.

So when the "this castle is haunted" stories began, I wasn't surprised.

Franco felt a hand tug his shirt as he got ready for bed; invisible fingers tousled Jay's hair. Danny, brushing his teeth one night, heard someone hiss "psst" at him, but no one was there. Fiona heard rustling in the kitchen and, annoyed when no one answered her, walked in from the great room to find the kitchen empty.

I laughed, until one day when, after spending a quiet half-hour with Fiona and Darby, I went to find Richard, who asked, "What are those two fighting about now?" I told him the girls weren't fighting, hadn't made a sound. "But I heard one of them crying," Richard said. "Crying and crying."

The wind at the castle was strong at times, but it always sounded precisely like the wind.

I kept an eye, and ear, out after that, but it was all hard to believe. I have been in houses that felt disturbed or scarred, but Turin Castle was not like that, not scary at all. It was lovely and interesting; even those who felt the spirit thought it was mischievous, not malicious.

I began to feel snubbed, having not encountered it.

Best-laid plans

The day of the great ash scattering came, and we made our way north to Downpatrick Head with an

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

Turin Castle in Kilmaine County Mayo, Ireland.

MARY McNAMARA, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS



WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific

Festivals AND MORE

Tokushima Prefecture's charms extend beyond Awa Odori season

By **AYA ICHIHASHI**
Stars and Stripes

When I think of the main attractions of Tokushima, the prefecture where I was born and raised, a few things come to mind: Beautiful landscapes, historic attractions and a wide variety of unique cultural experiences.

Located on the eastern coast of Shikoku Island just off the mainland, Tokushima is one of the least-populated prefectures in Japan, with about 750,000 inhabitants living in the region as of 2016.

The area is known throughout Japan for its thriving agricultural industry and for being the country's only producer of indigo — a natural dye famous for its deep, rich blue color. Easily accessible from most points in Japan by plane, highway bus, car or ferry, Tokushima is also famous for its seafood and the local system of onsen, or Japanese hot springs.

However, ask a local about the draw of Tokushima and you'll soon learn that the area is celebrated for its annual Awa Odori festivities, which are held every August. Awa Odori is a popular dance festival that traditionally coincides with the Japanese festival of Obon, which honors one's ancestors. During the Obon season, it is believed that the spirits of ancestors come home to visit their relatives.

During the prefecture's Awa Odori celebration, the population of the capital of Tokushima City swells with tourists all there to witness the music and displays of dancers.

One of my favorite places in Tokushima is Iya-no-Kazurabashi — a suspended vine bridge made of woven Actinidia arguta vines located deep in the mountains of the Iya Valley in Nishi-Iyayama Village, a two-hour drive west of the capital.

The bridge was an essential thoroughway in the 1600s for the local villagers. Today, the bridge has been reinforced with steel wires for additional safety, but vines obscure the steel wires as a decorative nod to the bridge's former glory.

Measuring 45 meters long and 2 meters wide, walking across the bridge is no easy feat. The steps are spaced three to four inches apart, making the river below very visible — so those who are afraid of heights might want to opt for a less-thrilling activity. Crossing the bridge will set visitors back \$50 yen (about \$4.84) for adults and 350 yen for children.

Not big on adrenaline? Visitors to the Iya Valley can also enjoy hiking to a nearby waterfall and visiting one of the many onsen in the area. There are many food vendors located near the bridge, making this an ideal spot for a light snack or lunch. Among the many items for sale here is dekomawashi — a grilled skewer of charbroiled potato, konnyaku and tofu glazed with miso that's perfect for vegetarians. Also available is amago no shioyaki, or lightly salted charbroiled salmon also served on a skewer. Both are the perfect introductions to Tokushima's rich local cuisine.

In Naruto City, about 30 minutes north of Tokushima City, is another natural wonder of the region: Uzushio, or natural whirlpools.

Created when a large volume of water moves between the narrow straits of the coastline during high and low tide, the whirlpools measure as much as 32 yards in diameter. It's best to visit during the full moon or new moon, as the gravitational pull creates the largest whirlpool effect. Large boats ferry tourists closer to the whirlpools every 40 minutes from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., costing about 1,800 yen for adults. Visitors can also watch the whirlpools from a nearby bridge observatory.

Tokushima has something for everyone year-round. Whether you're looking to witness one of the most famous dance festivals in the country, cross a unique bridge, enjoy some local produce or get up close to some of the world's largest whirlpools, Tokushima makes a memorable getaway.

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PHOTOS BY **AYA ICHIHASHI**/Stars and Stripes

Nishi-Iyayama Village's vine bridge, Kazura Bashi, is 45 meters long and is covered in Actinidia arguta vines. Right: Visitors complete the one-way walk over the steps spaced three to four inches apart, with the river visible below.



Lightly salted charbroiled amago salmon roast over the charcoal grill at a food stand area near Kazura Bridge.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Tokushima is easily accessible. Tokushima Awaodori Airport services regular flights from Okinawa, Tokyo and Fukuoka — with flights ranging in price depending on the carrier and season. From mainland Japan, highway buses provide the easiest and most economical means of transportation. From downtown Osaka, the trip takes roughly three hours and costs 6,700 yen (about \$59) round trip. From downtown Hiroshima, the 4.5-hour bus ride costs about 10,300 yen round trip. Buses are also available from cities such as Kobe, Tokyo, Nagoya and Kyoto.

COSTS

Be sure to carry enough cash for smaller purchases, transportation fare and snacks. ATMs are readily available at convenience stores and other locations throughout the prefecture.

FOOD

Try some of Tokushima's famous local cuisine, which includes Tokushima ramen and locally grown produce.

INFORMATION

Online: discovertokushima.net/en

— Aya Ichihashi

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific

A streamlined take on New Mexican pork, hominy stew

America's Test Kitchen

Also known as posole, this fragrant and spicy New Mexican stew combines toothsome hominy and tender chunks of pork in a mildly spicy, verdant base. We wanted to use the multicooker to make a streamlined version that would maintain the stew's characteristically complex flavor.

Plenty of onion plus jalapeños and garlic offered a bold base, while a bit of chipotle chile in adobo brought smoky depth and spice. We also found that adding canned hominy before pressure or slow cooking allowed it to soak up lots of flavor from the porky broth, and the fluffy, chewy kernels released starch, which thickened the stew.

Minced cilantro, stirred in at the end, added bright, fresh flavor.

Serve with diced tomato, diced avocado and thinly sliced radishes.

CHIPOTLE PORK AND HOMINY STEW

Servings: 6-8
Pressure cook total time: 1 hour, 10 minutes
Slow cook total time: 5 hours, 40 minutes

Ingredients
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2 onions, chopped fine
2 jalapeño chiles, stemmed, seeded and minced

¹/₂ cup all-purpose flour
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon minced canned chipotle chile in adobo sauce
2 teaspoons minced fresh oregano or ¹/₂ teaspoon dried

1 cup dry white wine
2 cups chicken broth, plus extra as needed

2 (15-ounce) cans white or yellow hominy, rinsed
8 ounces carrots, peeled and sliced 1 inch thick

2 bay leaves
3 pounds boneless pork butt roast, pulled apart at seams, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces

Salt and pepper
¹/₄ cup minced fresh cilantro
Lime wedges

Directions
Using highest sauté or browning function, heat oil in multicooker until shimmering. Add onions and jalapeños and cook until vegetables are softened and lightly browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in flour, garlic, chipotle and oregano and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Slowly whisk in wine, scraping up any browned bits and smoothening out any lumps. Stir in broth, hominy, carrots and bay leaves. Season pork with salt and pepper and stir into multicooker.

To pressure cook: Lock lid in place and close pressure release valve. Select high pressure cook function and cook for 25 minutes. Turn off multicooker and quick-release pressure. Carefully remove lid, allowing steam to escape away from you.

To slow cook: Lock lid in place and open pressure release valve. Select low slow cook function and cook until pork is tender, 4 to 5 hours. (If using Instant Pot, select high slow cook function and increase cooking range to 6 to 7 hours.) Turn off multicooker and carefully remove lid, allowing steam to escape away from you.

Discard bay leaves. Using large spoon, skim excess fat from surface of stew. Adjust consistency with extra hot broth as needed. Stir in cilantro and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with lime wedges.



PHOTOS BY CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II/Stars and Stripes

The sisters who own Salsa were inspired by their Okinawan grandparents to bring Peruvian cuisine to the island.

After Hours: Okinawa

By CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II
Stars and Stripes

One beauty of life is learning about different cultures through food — but in Okinawa, one of the smallest prefectures in Japan, finding authentic versions of dishes from around the world can sometimes be a bit difficult. Luckily, a small neighborhood restaurant on the island offers diners the chance to sample a type of Latin American cuisine that's a rare find even outside of the Land of the Rising Sun: Peruvian food.

If you are looking to experience something new (or want to revisit the flavors of Peru), Salsa will not disappoint. I discovered Salsa by accident, after getting lost during an attempt to familiarize myself with the major highways of the island. I happened to be hungry, my stomach grumbling during the drive — and that's when a sign featuring the words "Peruvian Food" caught my eye.

Once inside, the restaurant's Peruvian-inspired décor — along with the two sisters who own Salsa — provided me with a warm welcome. Although born and raised in Peru, the owners were inspired by their Okinawan grandparents to bring Peruvian cuisine to the island.

For those unfamiliar with Peruvian food, Salsa's menu, which is available in both English and Japanese, features photos of each dish to help make ordering a bit easier. I was pleased with the restaurant's variety of well-known Peruvian staples — which includes everything from arroz con pollo (1,000 yen, or about \$8.90), a chicken and rice dish common in Latin American cuisine, to estofado de carne (1,200 yen), a traditional Peruvian beef stew. Salsa is particularly well-known for its roasted chicken plates (900 yen for a quarter chicken and 1,300 for a half chicken), which are made with locally raised chicken and are accompanied by a variety of side dishes.

For less-adventurous eaters, Salsa also offers a wide selection of specialty pizzas, such as a classic margherita pizza (starting at 1,000 yen), a seafood pizza (starting at 1,200 yen) and a German potato pizza (starting at 1,100 yen), which the restaurant claims is popular with children. While the pizzas looked

SALSA

LOCATION: 16-1 Misato, Okinawa City, Okinawa, Japan
DIRECTIONS: From Gate 3 of Kadena Air Base, turn right onto Route 74. At the Misato Intersection, turn left onto Route 85, then turn right onto Route 329. Salsa will be located on the left side of the road on a corner directly adjacent to a baseball field.

HOURS: Open Tuesday through Saturday, from 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., with last order for dining in at 8:15 p.m. and take-away at 8:45 p.m.
COST: Yen or credit cards accepted. Entrees start at 900 yen, about \$8 (for a quarter roast chicken plate) up to 1,650 yen.

DRESS: Casual
INFORMATION: 098-938-6950
— Carlos M. Vazquez II

appetizing, I had come to Salsa to satisfy my Peruvian food cravings — so I opted to save the pizzas for another visit.

For my meal, I chose the lomo saltado (1,300 yen) — a popular Peruvian dish featuring sautéed lean beef, onions, tomatoes and french fries. The dish also comes with rice and a side of soup. The soup, a fusion of Japanese miso and Spanish chicken noodle, was the surprise of the meal.

After ordering, I was a bit worried I had selected a dish that had the potential to be greasy and a bit unhealthy. But once my food arrived, my fears were put to rest. The lomo saltado was an evenly balanced dish, with the strips of tender, moist steak accented by the unique Latin flavors that define Peru's cuisine. To add some spice to your dish, the restaurant's ají sauce — a classic Peruvian condiment containing mayonnaise, cheese, cilantro, peppers, garlic and lime — gives an added kick to anything on the menu.

To wash down my meal, I kept with the Peruvian theme and ordered Inca Kola (280 yen), one of Peru's most famous beverages. Created in 1935, Inca Kola is



One of the many traditional dishes available at Salsa is lomo saltado (1,300 yen) — a popular Peruvian staple featuring sautéed lean beef, onions, tomatoes and french fries.

a common soft drink similar to cream soda sold in many Latin American restaurants, and its eye-catching golden can is undeniably iconic.

After my meal, I still had room for dessert. I was told that Salsa's chifón cake is one of its more popular dessert options, but the restaurant was sold out during my visit — so I ordered the leche asada (250 yen), an oven-baked milk custard similar to flan. Although the leche asada wasn't as sweet as I would have liked, eating the creamy custard brought back memories of dining at the homes of my Peruvian friends while growing up.

Being able to practice both my Japanese and my Spanish with the staff while dining at Salsa was an added bonus, and made me feel a bit more "at home."

Salsa's take on classic Peruvian dishes is a unique standout on the Okinawa food scene, adding variety to the selection of restaurants on the island. The friendly service and wide selection of dishes is definitely enough to keep me coming back for more.

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Twitter: @StripesCarlos

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Could you SQUEEZE



into a new airplane bathroom?

istock photo

Growing numbers of airlines are shrinking onboard facilities to grow the bottom line

BY LORI ARATANI ✈ *The Washington Post*

At 5-foot-8, Eddie Santos is about average size, but on a recent flight from Los Angeles to Washington, a trip to the plane's lavatory left him feeling like Gulliver in the land of Lilliputians.

It was a tight fit.

"I had to twist my shoulder just to get in," he said. "It was uncomfortable."

Flyer Melody Arganda was able to squeeze inside, but she said the space was so narrow her thighs brushed against the walls.

"Absolutely ridiculous," harrumphed the retired teacher from Riverside, Calif. "If I were any bigger, I wouldn't have fit."

Flying has become a game of inches, with airlines trying to squeeze as many passengers as possible on planes. They have made seats smaller, shrunk leg-room and now, as Santos and Arganda discovered on a recent cross-country flight, made the bathrooms so small an average-size person feels squeezed.

On some of the newer planes flown by American, Delta and United airlines, the bathrooms in coach are just 24 inches wide. For comparison, that's roughly the width of the average dishwasher or the size of Kim Kardashian's waist.

By comparison, the average port-a-potty is roughly 34 inches wide. Same with the stalls in the women's restrooms at Reagan National Airport.

According to the manufacturer, the new-style bathrooms free up enough space to fit six more passengers onboard.

Delta was the first to introduce the smaller bathrooms in 2014, but the shift gained more attention late last year when American began using new jets equipped with the tiny lavatories. United debuted theirs in June.

Joseph "Pep" Valdes, a parking executive from Los Angeles, who is 5-foot-10, described his experience trying to use the bathroom on a recent American flight to Washington.

"If you are one inch taller, I don't know how you'd get in there," he said. "I saw some big guys [on the flight] and wondered ..."

Travelers and consumer groups have bemoaned the downsizing of personal space on planes for years, watching as the average seat, once 18 inches wide, shrank by an inch and a half, and the distance between rows went from an average of 35 inches to 31 inches — 28 inches on some airlines.

But bathrooms? Really?

"Given the trend line in the decreasing of personal space, this is just another instance of the airlines treating their customers as profit points, not as actual people," said John Breyault, a vice president of the National Consumers League. "I challenge any airline executive at any airline to have to change the diaper of a screaming infant in a two-foot-wide bathroom."

(Note: The tiny bathrooms are equipped with pull-down changing tables. But fitting an adult, a baby and a diaper bag in the space would require some maneuvering.)

At 6-foot-1, Zach Guimond, a manufacturing engineer from Iowa, has grown accustomed to being squeezed when he travels. But on a recent flight — he can't remember the model of plane — he found himself in a bathroom so tiny, he had to lean to one side to fit inside.

"Not only was there barely enough room to turn around, the ceiling was sloped, and I couldn't even stand up straight," he said. "It was pretty uncomfortable."

He pulled out his phone and scrolled to a selfie he had taken. His head is angled against one of the walls, a grimace on his face.

Shirley Sosin, a retiree from California, remembers the good old days of flying when "you could put our makeup on" in a plane bathroom. "Men could shave. Things have changed," she said.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

FROM PAGE 34

But the reality is this: The nation's airspace can handle only so many flights per day, so airlines have done the next best thing — they have found ways to put more passengers on every flight. A few inches here and there can make a big difference to an airline's bottom line.

Gary Weissel, managing officer of Tronos Aviation Consulting, estimated that airlines like American could generate about \$400,000 a year in additional revenue for each seat added. Weissel based his calculation on typical jet usage and the average fare.

Last fall, American told investors it could make an additional \$500 million in revenue through 2021 by revamping its 737-800 jets to fit 12 more passengers and its Airbus SE A321 planes to fit nine additional travelers.

According to SeatGuru.com, American's 737 MAX 8 has 172 seats — 12 more than the 737-800, which had 160. For those keeping track, that's two additional rows. United's 737-700 jets had 118 seats, but its newer 737-800V3 jets have 166. Translation: That is 48 more people competing for overhead storage.

It does not take an engineer to know that all that space for seats has to come from somewhere.

On its website, Rockwell Collins, the Iowa-based company that manufactures bathrooms for Boeing's 737, boasts that installing its Advanced Spacewell lavatories can free up space for six additional passengers.

All this downsizing comes as the average American's waistline is expanding. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the average American man weighs 196 pounds — nearly 30 pounds more than he did in the 1960s. The average American woman weighs 166 — nearly 19 pounds more than she did in the 1960s.

In addition, nearly 79 million Americans are obese — that is 35 percent of the population, and the number is projected to reach 50 percent by 2030.

But you do not have to be overweight to feel the squeeze when you fly.

There is no federal standard for bathroom size on single-aisle aircraft, so the decision is largely left to the airlines and manufacturers. However, aircraft with 60 or more seats that do not have an accessible bathroom for people with disabilities must provide an onboard wheelchair to provide access as long they have been given 48 hours notice. The chairs are designed to help disabled passengers get to the bathroom door, but not necessarily inside the lavatory.

Alison McAfee, a spokeswoman for Airlines for America, which represents some of the nation's largest carriers, counters that airlines have invested billions to upgrade their fleets and give travelers — at every price point — more options.

Indeed, airlines brag that today's planes are lighter and more fuel-efficient, with

roomier overhead bins and WiFi connections so speedy that travelers may forget they are hurtling through the air 30,000 feet above the ground. Though in many cases, passengers have to pay extra to connect or even to use the overhead bins.

"In 2017 alone, airlines invested an estimated \$19.9 billion to enhance their product and customer experience, including newer larger aircraft, larger overhead bins and various amenities that customers want when they travel," McAfee said.

But what about the tiny bathrooms? "The idea that airlines would intentionally downgrade the flying experience or undermine safety is a flawed premise," she said.

On a United flight from Houston and Orlando, Zach Honig, editor-at-large for ThePointsGuy.com, a travel-advice website, watched passengers as they emerged from the smaller lavatories.

"All of them seemed really surprised," he said. Not just by the size, he said, but by the sink, which was so tiny it was impossible to emerge without getting soaked. The bathrooms, Honig later wrote on his blog, were "shockingly bad."

Maddie King, a spokeswoman for United, said lavatories on the airline's newer 737s are the "industry standard." Joshua Freed, spokesman for American Airlines, said the company is "not unique and not alone" in lavatory size. Delta Air Lines declined to say how many of its planes have been equipped with the smaller bathrooms, but they do include jets that fly out of National.

All said they are not aware of passenger complaints about the bathrooms. However, earlier this year, flight attendants from American Airlines raised safety concerns about the smaller bathrooms with chief executive Doug Parker.

"We certainly hear about it from passengers," said Jeffrey Ewing, national safety and security chair for the Association of Professional Flight Attendants, which represents American's flight attendants. "The bathrooms are very small. The sinks are tiny. They are not very comfortable."

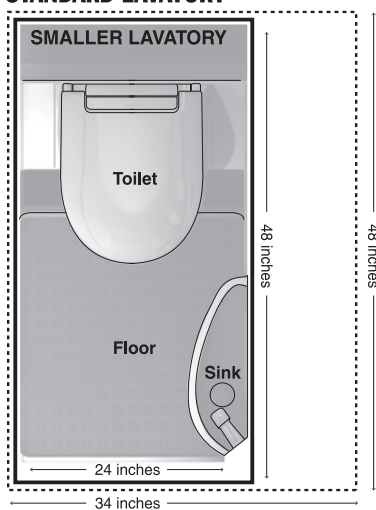
Flight attendants from other unions have also raised concerns.

"These 'space-saving' bathrooms have created accessibility issues for passengers of size and passengers with disabilities," said Taylor Garland, spokeswoman for the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA. "Depending on the airline's configuration, the aft bathroom doors have caused physical injuries to passengers and crew. We continue to press airlines to mitigate these issues and ensure accessibility for all passengers. But this issue deserves attention and needs to be addressed."



So how much have bathrooms shrunk? Airlines won't comment on specific dimensions, and manufacturers such as

STANDARD LAVATORY



SOURCE: The Washington Post

The new smaller lavatories are about 24 inches wide, around 10 inches smaller than older standard coach bathrooms.

Boeing said the information is proprietary.

A spokeswoman for Rockwell Collins, the Iowa-based company that manufactures lavatories for the Boeing 737, said they, too, are barred from commenting on bathroom dimensions but directed a reporter to the company's website, which details the benefits of the lavatory options offered.

Its Advanced Spacewell lavatory frees "up to seven additional inches of cabin space." Airlines interested in installing the lavatories on existing aircraft could free up space for "an additional 6 passengers in certain configurations," the website notes.

The company indicated that the trend toward smaller lavatories is driven in part by the rise of low-cost carriers like Spirit and Allegiant that are catering to flyers who care more about price than comfort.

"As the industry continues its move toward a multilayered model of travel, so has the need for different lavatory options," said Pam Tardy-Clearly, a spokeswoman for Rockwell Collins.

Consumer groups, however, are fighting back. They argue that downsizing on planes — whether seats or bathrooms — isn't just a matter of comfort but also of safety.

Weissel, the aviation consultant, said

complaints about the bathrooms are unlikely to discourage airlines from trying to find new ways to add even more seats. There is too much revenue at stake.

Add to that this: The vast majority of the public flies so infrequently that people might not even realize the bathrooms have gotten smaller. Even if they do, they might not care, he said.

He might be right. Personal space is shrinking, but the appetite for travel remains robust.

Airlines for America said it expects record numbers of people to travel this holiday season.

Breyault, of the National Consumers League, said he thinks the demand is tied to the economy rather than better service.

"We live in a big country, and people have to fly all the time because they don't really have a lot of great alternatives."

For some, upgraded wireless and roomier overhead bins might be enough. Honig said the WiFi on the flight was the best he has ever experienced, though he noted that it was not free.

As for the bathroom, he figures there is only so much give. He is looking on the bright side.

After all, he said: "There's no way they can get any smaller unless they shrink the passenger."



The reality is this: The nation's airspace can handle only so many flights per day, so airlines have done the next best thing — they have found ways to put more passengers on every flight. A few inches here and there can make a big difference to an airline's bottom line.

WEEKEND: MUSIC



Guiding light

After musical courtship, Mumford & Sons find perfect producer for new album

By MESFIN FEKADU
Associated Press



Paul
Epworth

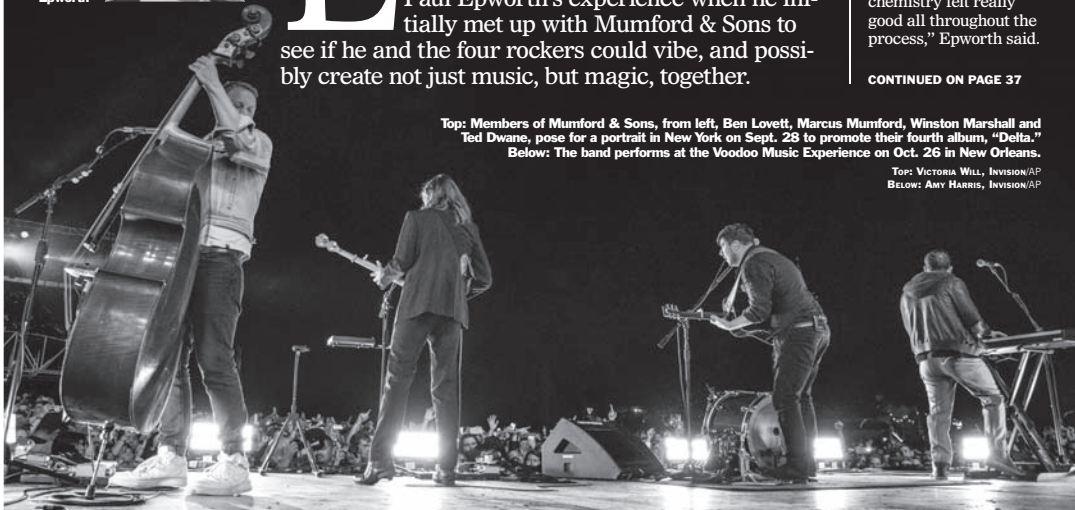
Ever been on a blind date with a rock star? How about four of them? That was Grammy-winning producer Paul Epworth's experience when he initially met up with Mumford & Sons to see if he and the four rockers could vibe, and possibly create not just music, but magic, together.

"It was all a bit like a series of blind dates to see how we hit it off. It took us a couple of sessions before we found out what the best method was. The chemistry felt really good all throughout the process," Epworth said.

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Top: Members of Mumford & Sons, from left, Ben Lovett, Marcus Mumford, Winston Marshall and Ted Dwane, pose for a portrait in New York on Sept. 26 to promote their fourth album, "Delta."
Below: The band performs at the Voodoo Music Experience on Oct. 26 in New Orleans.

TOP: VICTORIA WILL, INVISION/AP
BELOW: AMY HARRIS, INVISION/AP



WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

Hanson

String Theory (3CG Records)

The Hanson boys have done everything in their power to get you to listen beyond "MMMBop." They've put out solid new music, live CDs, Christmas albums — OK, lots of Christmas albums — greatest hits collections, and even covers of songs by U2 and Radiohead. Now they've gone uptown — they've gone orchestral.

Their 23-track double album, "String Theory," finds Isaac, Taylor and Zac Hanson reworking past songs and unreleased ones for swaths of strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion. One new song, "Siren Call," uses a 46-piece orchestra.

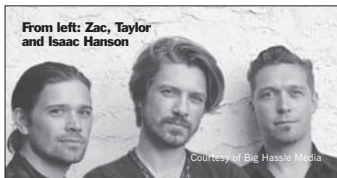
Snark if you must, but anything that gets Hanson's music a fresh listen is welcomed. Why this talented trio has never matched the success of "MMMBop" is one of those mysteries that go unsolved in the modern music business.

Many of the songs, thankfully, aren't overwhelmed by the Prague-based orchestra or often see its influence melt away, like on "Where's the Love" or "This Time Around." Sometimes it's all a tad forced, like on "Something Going Round." And sometimes, truth be told, the original is just better, like "Yearbook."

"String Theory" is not another greatest hits collection. Some Hanson songs that have appeared on such previous compilations — like "Get the Girl Back" and "Penny & Me" — have not been picked to be orchestrated. New or unreleased songs include "Reaching for the Sky," "Battle Cry," "Breaktown," and the really nice "No Rest for the Weary."

But you really want to know about what happened to "MMMBop," don't you? The new version is slower, more complex and yet still fun and catchy, even though it's been given a lushness rarely offered on other pop songs. We hope you listen. Maybe consider staying awhile?

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press



From left: Zac, Taylor and Isaac Hanson

Courtesy of Big Hassie Media

Laura Jane Grace & the Devouring Mothers

Bought to Rot (Bloodshot Records)

The words just tumble out of Laura Jane Grace on her new album, a torrent of thoughts, observations and memories from one of rock's most charismatic figures.

The Against Me! singer and guitarist has taken a break from her superb punk band to explore more glam-rock terrain with the side project Laura Jane Grace & the Devouring Mothers.

Her lyrics are barely contained by the structure of the songs, bellowed one moment or stretched into sing-talk poetry. One song, "Maid Depression," has 250 words, another has 240 and a third has 230.

"Bought to Rot" is less heavy than previous Against Me! offerings, with some songs that could easily fit on mainstream alt-rock radio. It's also less angry, more theatrical and more surreal. (Many of the songs feel in the vein of "Hedwig and the Angry Inch.") It's a dizzying, sometimes hysterical, sometimes heartbreaking, but always deeply personal album.

It kicks off with the claustrophobic "China Beach," with Grace seemingly jarred awake and confused: "Are you my enemy and are we at war?" she asks. "Are you the hunter? Am I the prey?"

Grace, whose life and career changed dramatically when she came out as a transgender woman in 2012, has teamed up in the new band with Against Me! drummer Adam Willard and Against Me! producer Marc Jacob Hudson on bass.

The album's lyrics explore everything from love gone bad to mental illness, with a sense of rootlessness throughout — two songs have Grace in hotels and one in an airplane. "Infinite distance, eternal displacement," she sings on "Born in Blood."

Fans of the Windy City might want to turn down song No. 8, titled "I Hate Chicago." It's an expatriate-laced stew of angst toward America's third-largest city, with Grace complaining about everything in her hometown from the food ("Learn how to make a pizza") to sports ("I hate the Cubs, the Sox, the Blackhawks and the Bulls") to its citizens ("You and all your self-righteous hippster hoods can go to hell.") It's seething and frenetic and wildly funny.

Other standouts include the R.E.M.-reminiscent "Apocalypse Now (& Later)," the Los Angelesish tunes "Amsterdam Hotel Room" and "Manic Depression," and the David Bowie-adjacent "Screamy Dreamy." There's electricity in every song and an abrasive unpredictability throughout. You can't ask for more — if you live outside Chicago.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press



Courtesy of Motormouth Media

Charles Bradley, "The Screaming Eagle of Soul," died of stomach cancer in 2017.

Charles Bradley

Black Velvet (Daptone)

Powerhouse soul shouter

Charles Bradley died last year at 69, a particularly painful loss because his late-breaking time in the limelight lasted less than a decade.

And — as anyone who ever saw "The Screaming Eagle of Soul" can attest — he came across as one of the warmest, most genuinely thankful-to-be-alive individuals ever to stand on a stage, which he would leave during shows in an attempt to hug everyone in the audience. (Bradley's was the second cancer death in the Daptone label family, less than a year after the loss of Sharon Jones in 2016.)

"Black Velvet" draws from sessions from three previous albums, taking its title from the alias Bradley used earlier in his career while fronting a James Brown cover band. The previously unreleased material includes covers of Neil Young ("Heart of Gold"), Nirvana ("Stay Away") and Rodriguez ("Slip Away"). None are quite as choice as Bradley's trademark transformation of Black Sabbath's "Changes," but the singer's earnest outpouring of warmth always carries the day, even when he's dropping lyrics from Barbra Streisand's "The Way We Were" into "I Hope You Find The Good Life." And though it initially seems kind of lame that the title track is an instrumental, it works as Bradley's band's moving tribute to their frontman, who died before cutting a vocal to the shimmering soul groove.

— Dan DeLuca
The Philadelphia Inquirer



FROM PAGE 36

"We went on a couple of dates," band leader Marcus Mumford said. "We did sessions before Christmas, which led to pretty much the final version of the song called 'Slip Away,' which is on the record. And we just felt like he was exactly the person we needed to help steer this ship for this fourth record. And we've never enjoyed recording more."

The result is the 14-track "Delta," released Nov. 16.

The band started writing new music after the album "Wilder Mind" was released in 2015, even though one of the "Delta" songs is six years old. Mumford said they tried to re-work the old track "about 400 times."

"It's called 'Forever' — ironically," he said.

"It wasn't called 'Forever' before. After the 600th time," chimed in Winston Marshall, who plays piano and electric guitar. Epworth was part of the solution. The band says when they didn't know what to do, he did.

"They were open to giving me a bit of space to run with stuff (and) try out what I had in mind," Epworth said. "It definitely made me feel like I was essentially a fifth member of the band."

The London group said they were familiar with Epworth's work — the producer is best known for crafting Adele's monster hit "Rolling in the Deep" and also win-

"We just felt like [Epworth] was exactly the person we needed to help steer this ship for this fourth record. And we've never enjoyed recording more."

Marcus Mumford

ning an Oscar with the British vocalist for the James Bond theme song "Skyfall." Epworth's credits also include songs with Coldplay, Florence + the Machine, U2, and Foster the People as well as lesser-known acts such as Glass Animals, Bloc Party and Plan B.

Marcus Dravs produced the band's 2009 debut, "Sigh No More," and its follow-up, 2012's "Babel," which won the album of the year Grammy. Both records reached platinum status and launched hits on the pop and rock charts. "Wilder Mind," produced by James Ford, still had rock hits but only went gold.

Epworth's fifth member status proved invaluable for "Delta," mainly recorded at Epworth's The Church Studios in London.

"(Paul) would just come back one day and be like, 'That is not your upbeat rock song. That is your downbeat piano ballad.' We'd be kind of just blindsided by the

moments of sheer visionary," multi-instrumentalist Ben Lovett said.

"Especially for a band of four collaborators — to have that person to help, decision-tie-breaker, those sort of moments (are important)," Lovett added. "If it were to be that we kind of fell out with our producer, it would be fine because we could leave the situation. If we fall out with each other, we've got a major problem. Luckily that's been something we've been able to avoid."

The songwriting process for each track on "Delta" varied — each of the band members work on songs individually and then bring them to the group.

Mumford said over the years he's learned how to be a better team player and let everyone's voice be heard.

"In the old days there was a sliver of immediacy and I think a slight immaturity, creatively... If someone else had a different idea, I personally had less patience for it than I do now," he said. "Now, I trust these guys' creative instincts so much. If they've got a different idea (and) it doesn't clash with me straight away, I'm intrigued to see where it goes."

One of the ideas that came from Lovett was "If I Say," a beautiful, building rock song, where the string arrangement and orchestra shine brightly. Lovett said he wrote the song "in a dream that I had whilst I was going through a bunch of stuff."

"I was halfway between grappling with

a divorce but also being in a new relationship," he continued. "The song questions a lot about commitment and about the power of commitment."

Personal experiences are what drove the overall songwriting behind the album, bassist Ted Dwane said.

"We write autobiographically. A lot has happened to us in our personal lives in the past few years and the overriding theme felt like entering the world," Dwane explained. "It felt like leaving the security of youth and innocence and manning up, basically."

Mumford & Sons, who formed in 2007 and started out as a live band, will get a chance to showcase the new songs on their 60-date "Delta" Tour, which kicked off in Dublin on Nov. 16.

They said another way they were inspired to write new songs came from listening to other artists' music in the studio.

"We'll constantly be introducing each other to new music like, 'Listen to this song here' and we'll turn it up loud," Mumford said. "Wins and I once had a very late, quite drunken night in London, demoing for the previous album where we listened to (Don Henley's) 'The Boys of Summer' about five times really loud and then tried to record our own. We called it 'Lads of Summer.' It's a monstrosity. We should have put it on the record though."

"Maybe on the next one," Marshall said. "By the way, I (expletive) love that song."

WEEKEND: BOOKS



Thrill a minute

Author Lee Child discusses new Jack Reacher novel 'Past Tense'

By ELISABETH VINCENTELLI
Newsday

It's not easy to create an iconic character, but that's what Lee Child, 63, has done with Jack Reacher. A former major in the Army's Military Police, Reacher is a supersize human fighting machine who roams the United States with no particular purpose, carrying only a wad of cash and a toothbrush. Thanks to his skills in sharpshooting and hand-to-hand combat, he also effortlessly vanquishes the many nefarious types who invariably cross his path.

In his 23rd outing, "Past Tense," Reacher finds himself in bucolic New Hampshire, digging for his family roots. What he finds is a big surprise — and, of course, more brawling.

Child spoke about the book with Newsday by telephone; the conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Newsday: Did you think of this book as an origin story for Reacher when you started it?

Child: I don't make a plan. I don't make an outline — I don't want to know what's going to happen. But I wrote that first paragraph and realized that I used birdwatching-type imagery about the migration of birds. And about the only thing we know about father from previous books is that he was a bird-watcher. So I thought, "Why have I done it that way? Well, this is obviously going to be the book about his father."

At the beginning, Reacher comes to a literal fork in the road and, as usual, he picks the option that leads him into trouble. How does this always happen to him, no matter where he is?

It's only once a year. The other 364 days, Reacher shows up somewhere and nothing happens. I say to people that I write those books as well, but my publisher won't publish them because they're too boring.

Seriously, there's definitely a convention in fiction that the reader is going to give you one free pass and then the rest of the book better be absolutely logical and correct. The one free pass that they give me is that Reacher takes a fork in the road and it leads to trouble. I guess that's the nature of series: Something always happens. It's harder with Reacher, of course, because he does not have a job. If you were writing a police series, then it's automatic: Every day you'd have five problems. **He never shies from a fight, but why does he seem to especially relish beating up bullies?**

Partly this is because bullying is obviously a very unpleasant thing, but also he thinks that they're phonies. Being a bully is basically about threatening, and Reacher is contemptuous of that: "What has this guy got? What is he going to threaten me with?" So it becomes a contest of arrogance, which is not particularly attractive, but it's a big part of Reacher's character. He fundamentally dislikes the fact that the bully is unrealistic.

There's a scene in the new book where Reacher almost goes down. Almost. Would he ever lose a fight?

It's part of the mystique of the books: He will always win. I wanted to do that as an antidote to all the books I was reading where the hero is incapable or worried or something like that. We all get that in our regular lives, we're always worried or scared of something. So I thought, "Let's make this guy completely invulnerable."

What do you think of the fact that Reacher's life, which is free of responsibilities, has become a dream for an increasing number of people?

The series started in 1997 and the first big emotional boost was 9/11, when people were saying, "We need a real Reacher, we need people like this." The second big boost came in 2008, 2009, with the financial crash, when people realized that owning stuff, chasing stuff is a liability more than a pleasure. And that turned people on to the idea of, "Wouldn't it be great to have nothing, to live with nothing?" In a way, the times caught up with Reacher's lifestyle.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“Crazy Rich Asians”: It’s incredibly important to recognize that “Crazy Rich Asians” is the first major modern-day Hollywood release since “The Joy Luck Club” in 1993 to feature a predominantly Asian cast. There has been much furor in the film world over the lack of diversity in movies and the Asian community has been one of the most slighted.

There’s also an argument to be made that “Crazy Rich Asians” should not be thought of as a film filled with Asian actors but instead one of the best romantic comedies in general to come along in years. The movie could have as easily been called “Sleepless in Singapore” as there has not been a romantic comedy this good since Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan went to steal our hearts.



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

From left, Michelle Yeoh, Henry Golding and Constance Wu star in “Crazy Rich Asians,” now available on DVD.

“Blindspotting”: Just like psychologist Edgar Rubin’s test where a picture can be seen as a vase or as two faces depending on a person’s perspective, “Blindspotting,” written by and starring Daveed Diggs and Rafael Casal, is a film full of stark dualities that take on varying viewpoints.

On the surface, it is both an indictment and love letter to the city of Oakland, Calif., as the community goes through a major transformation. As the film unfolds, the production also takes a look at how social change can be both a boom and a bust. The final layer of comparisons and contrasts looks at how two young men can grow up with the same outside stimuli but end up being as different in the way they are treated as black and white.

Also available on DVD:

“Kin”: Ex-con and his adopted teenage brother find themselves on the run from a vengeful criminal with only a mysterious weapon to protect themselves.

“Dog Days”: When a barista (Vanessa Hudgens) finds a stray Chihuahua, she learns that a customer (Jon Bass) heads a rescue agency.

“Little Italy”: Former childhood pals Nikki (Emma Roberts) and Leo (Hayden Christensen) are attracted to each other as adults but must deal with feuding families.

“Longmire: The Complete Series”: Includes all six seasons of the cable series that follows Wyoming Sheriff Walt Longmire (Robert Taylor).

“Candyman”: The ‘90s cult horror classic is now out in a Blu-ray edition.

“No Offense: Series 2”: A bomb blast at a funeral plunges detective Vivienne Deering (Joanna Scanlan) and her team into a gang war inflamed by a crime family matriarch.

“Crackdown Big City Blues”: Looks at the brutality and violence associated with drug dealers in a community THAT wants to protect its citizens from the addiction epidemic.

“It’s a Wonderful Life”: The Frank Capra classic starring Jimmy Stewart, Donna Reed and Lionel Barrymore is available in a 4K digital restoration.

“Frontline: Left Behind America”:

Documentary looks for reasons some communities continue to fight for economic revitalization 10 years after the financial crisis.

—Rick Bentley/TNS



Netflix

Alan Arkin, left, and Michael Douglas are part of the impressively starry cast of Netflix’s “The Kominsky Method.” Writer and producer Chuck Lorre says he created the show out of what he’s experienced in Hollywood as he has grown older.

Small-screen giants

‘Kominsky Method’ unites acting legends Arkin, Douglas

By RICK BENTLEY
Tribune News Service

It would be a logical assumption that with two Oscars and credits that stretch back more than a half-century, there’s very little Michael Douglas doesn’t know about acting. But he found out while working on Netflix’s “The Kominsky Method” that he still has plenty to learn from his co-star, Alan Arkin.

In “The Kominsky Method,” Douglas plays Sandy Kominsky, an actor who has turned a short run of success into being a top Hollywood acting coach. Along with his longtime friend and agent, Norman (Arkin), the pair tackle life’s challenges while trying to survive in Los Angeles, a city that values youth and beauty. Nancy Travis plays Lisa, a 50-something recent divorcee who joins Sandy’s acting class and not only discovers her hidden talent but starts a connection that takes them both by surprise.

Both Douglas and Arkin have been working in TV and film for decades but had not had the opportunity to work together until the Netflix production. Douglas has been a fan of Arkin’s work since seeing the 1966 comedy “The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!”

“I’d forgotten about his Second City background in comedy and how good he was,” Douglas adds. “I learned a lot from him in the time we were together, just about comedic timing and sense and

he’s got certain philosophies that were really, really helpful. We talked a fair much about politics and he’s just a joy. He’s really good, and I think we both enjoyed the opportunity doing eight episodes and the ensemble feel of getting together.”

The rule for Douglas over the years has been to pick projects that resonate with him. He could relate deeply with what Sandy Kominsky is going through. The first script reminded Douglas of Wynn Handman, a teacher Douglas worked with years ago. Kominsky reflects how Handman was a nurturer who gave actors confidence.

The man who brought Douglas and Arkin together is Chuck Lorre, the show’s producing and writing credits include “Two and a Half Men,” “The Big Bang Theory,” “Mike & Molly,” “Mom,” “Dharma & Greg” and “Roseanne.” The inspiration for Lorre to create “The Kominsky Method” came out of what he was feeling as he grew older in Hollywood.

The way Lorre, 66, looks at it is when it comes to the loss of friends and loved ones plus a distancing by a youth culture that comes with aging, the two options are to cry or laugh. He opted to find the funny.

Douglas has not done a lot of comedy, but he felt comfortable with “The Kominsky Method” because like so many other productions from Lorre, the stories fluctuate between comedy and tragedy. At the same time, Lorre got to work with two actors he considers to be

legends in the business. That was good and a little bad.

“It’s a little intimidating. It’s humbling, and it’s an opportunity to learn. I got to watch two masters at their craft up close every day and watch and learn,” Lorre says. “What a gift that is to be able to go to work in the morning and learn stuff you didn’t know. At this point in my life, seeing things from different perspectives, seeing how things could be done differently, that’s great. I love that.”

Douglas, 74, continues to land acting roles, including the comic book-inspired “Ant-Man and the Wasp.” But he has experienced the kind of changes that come with getting older that inspired Lorre to create the series.

Douglas had become frustrated with how little attention the smaller movies he made got (“Solitary Man,” “King of California”), so he liked the idea of returning to television, where he got his first big career boost starring in “The Streets of San Francisco.”

“Here’s a chance to play some comedy, which I don’t normally get a chance to do that often in a format like with Netflix, streaming, where there are no commercials and it’s like a 25- to 35-minute movie. No time limits, language and all of that,” Douglas says.

“So it was a great opportunity and sort of been my year between doing green screen movies, which I’d never done in my life before, and now having a chance to do a series like this with Chuck and Alan has been really a treat.”

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Fitness for LIFE

Physical inactivity might be as deadly as smoking. Now is the time to get in shape

By LESLIE BARKER
The Dallas Morning News

How imperative is being fit to living a longer and healthier life? Much more than we might have ever realized. In fact, a new report finds that not being fit is seen to be as dangerous to our health as smoking.

We can put it in a more positive light: By being fit, you reduce your risk of dying early in just about the same way that not smoking keeps you alive longer. Either way, if we don't do something soon, we're in trouble. Close to one-third of Americans are considered obese. Only 20 percent get the recommended amount of exercise.

To come to these conclusions, writes Gretchen Reynolds in this New York Times story, researchers used a database of middle-aged men and women who had completed treadmill tests, and pulled records of more than 122,000 of them. They then checked death records for 10 years after those tests were administered.

The results? "Some of the men and women had died and also that there [are] strong correlations between fitness and mortality," Reynolds writes. "The greater someone's fitness, the less likely he or she was to have died prematurely and vice versa, the numbers showed."

Those in the study with the lowest fitness level, she continues, were more likely to die early than those whose level was considered below average. Those with above-average fitness were more likely to die before those with high fitness levels.

The study used the phrase "being fit" over "exercise," and did not offer any specific amount of exercise needed to be fit. Which means, in my book, that you just have to move. You don't have to run a marathon or swim 100 laps or do the elliptical machine for an hour. Walk at lunch. Take the stairs. Run in place dur-

ing commercials. Do countertop pushups while your coffee reheats.

The American Heart Association recommends adults spend 150 minutes per week in moderate exercise, 75 in vigorous, or a combination of the two. Basically, that's a half-hour a day. You can even spread that out over three 10-minute chunks.

It doesn't even need to be that long, according to family physician Annie Ray, who wrote a post for kevinmd.com about four things doctors want patients to know. One involved exercise: Stop making excuses for not doing it, she writes. "You can get an excellent workout in 12 minutes with high-intensity interval training, so I don't want to hear, 'I don't have time.' Just shoot me straight, tell me where you are, and we'll work from there."

Here's my latest favorite five-minute

workout. It's from Men's Health, and I try to do it a few times a week, telling myself, "In five minutes, you can either be finished or you can still be griping about getting started."

Here's how it works: Do one squat, then 10 pushups. Then do two squats and nine pushups. Keep adding one more squat and one fewer pushup until you've done 10 squats and one pushup. Grand total: 55 of each. If you haven't hit the five-minute mark (which is my own goal), add five of each until you do. I think there are days I get more out of this than I do running and walking for 45 minutes.

OK, I'm pushing you out the door now, or at least handing you a jump rope and some light weights. Go for it. And while you're at it, if you happen to be a smoker, for your own sake and for the sake of us all, please try to at least cut down.

Improve your speed with these simple tips

By WINA STURGEON
Adventure Sports Weekly

Are you a recreational or elite athlete who works out religiously specifically to be in good shape to play your sport? Are you shocked by the fact that your reflexes are not getting faster, despite your great conditioning program?

If you answered "yes" to the second question, that begs another question: How fast do you generally move? It has nothing to do with the common belief that putting on lean muscle makes an athlete slower. That's just a myth. Building more muscle does what it's supposed to do; it really does make an athlete more capable of putting out speed. But again, read the last part of that previous sentence carefully.

It "makes an athlete more capable of putting out speed." But it doesn't give you the speed. Speed is something you have

to work specifically to obtain. An excellent way to start your speed workout is by walking faster. This doesn't mean just going outside for a walk and consciously walking faster, although doing so will help, but being aware of how fast you walk at home, at school or in the office.

As most folks know, a good athlete never looks like they are making an effort. They grab the ball or skate or run without the look of straining to be fast. So grade yourself on the speed of the short walks you do indoors. Do you get up from a seated posture slowly? Is your walk from the couch to the refrigerator more of a saunter?

Every time you are on your feet to walk, even if it's just a distance of a dozen or so feet, keep speed in mind. Increase the speed of your walk, no matter how long or short the walking

distance is.

At first, you may not be able to walk at a faster pace without showing, or at least feeling, the effort. But if you deliberately improve your walking speed, it will eventually become effortless. The goal is to accustom your body, muscles and mind to a faster gait so that you're not even aware that you are moving your feet and legs faster than you once did.

Walking, because it's a basic movement for most humans, will deliberately increase your sense of speed. Now to improve upon that sense so it reflects on your sport — which again begs the question: When lifting weights, how fast do you lift?

Your muscle-building and strength workouts will help you recruit more muscle fibers, but to be quicker, you need to perform each weight movement



PHOTOS FROM DREAMSTIME/TNS

When you are on your feet, pay attention to how fast you are moving. Slowly increasing your speed will make you stronger over time.

quicker. Start out with a much lighter weight than you regularly lift — about half of your normal poundage. Be sure to perform the full range of motion for the exercise; don't get sloppy just because you're trying to do it faster. You'll soon be able to increase the weight and recruit more muscle fibers with each lift,

which will soon transfer over to the athletic moves of your sport.

Jumping rope is also a speed-specific activity. It's a great way to be able to recruit more muscle fibers as you turn the rope faster and learn to move your legs faster to keep up the pace. You will actually notice your speed improving.

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Smartphones and sleepovers

For tweens and teens, the mix might be toxic

By BETH SWANSON

Special to The Washington Post

When my daughter was born in 2005, managing cellphones at a sleepover wasn't even on my parenting radar. Thirteen birthdays later, I agreed to host a slumber party with 13 girls. They would play games, watch movies, eat ice cream and sleep in a giant pile on our living room floor. And cellphones were my main concern.

At 11 p.m., my daughter put out a bright pink basket and asked the 11 girls with phones to pass them over. Three phones appeared. I picked up the basket and walked around to groups of girls, still on their phones, and asked them to please put them in with the others. Five more phones. I put it on the table and made a general request, that anyone still holding a phone put it with the others, and I went to get ready for bed. Ten minutes later, I collected the phones from my daughter.

"There's nine," she said. "That's pretty good, right?" Close somewhere, shoved under pillows or stuffed animals, were two remaining phones. I looked at my daughter's face and I could see her silently begging me not to make a scene, not to go on a search, not to embarrass her in the middle of her birthday party.

Parenting in the age of technology comes with its own set of challenges, and none is clearer to me, a newly minted parent of young teenagers, than how we regulate and monitor cellphone use.

The average age a child gets a cellphone is 10. According to research released by Nielsen in 2017, of the kids who have phones between 13, 45 percent get them between age 10 and 12, and 16 percent have phones when they are 8. By the teenage years, 95 percent of kids have access to a smartphone. All of this translates to more phones at younger ages, which means that phones are the norm in places where they used to be the exception. Places such as elementary and middle school sleepovers.

In the past two years, my daughter has been invited to parties that have plans for scavenger hunts, photos and making movies. But what happens at 2 a.m., when the games are done, and a parent is left with a group of kids, all with relatively unsupervised access to phones?

What we see with sleepovers is how I would call diminished inhibition that comes with sleep deprivation," says Deborah Heitner, author of "Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive) in Their Digital World" and the blog Raising Digital Natives. "A kid who makes sensible decisions at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. is not the kid that makes sensible decisions after hours of



istock photo

junk food, of no sleep, of being kind of worn down by peers."

Our first experience with this late-night lapse in judgment came two years ago, when my son woke up to a text that said, "We have taken your sister." Funny to her friends, when sent from her phone in the middle of the night, but scary to my groggy son, who was convinced that his sister had been kidnapped. He calmed down only when we called his sister to show him she was fine. Plot twist: She was asleep,

sleeping — which is a situation that you can't get consent, so clearly you shouldn't be taking pictures of anyone when they're sleeping — you just shouldn't do that," Heitner says. "It's upsetting and it's a big violation."

Just ask my son.

What's the best way for parents to manage cellphones during a sleepover? Clearly, putting out a basket to collect them isn't the most effective strategy, as I learned.

"Parents need to step in and be the frontal lobe, the person who regulates the impulses," says Danny O'Rourke, a clinical psychologist in Seattle who works with adolescents and the author of the blog Knowing Anxiety. "I like the idea of putting it in the invitation ahead of time so they know they will be asked to hand in their phones, or individually ask kids to turn in their phones. You may be more successful because they know what to expect when you ask for the phone, and they would have to actively disobey a request."

And what if, like me, you learn that lesson a little bit late? I was staring at my daughter at 11:30 p.m., torn between concern about missing phones hidden overnight. I thought it had worked. But by the following night, I heard stories of texts sent to people who weren't invited, and of pictures taken of sleeping girls.

Parenting tweens and teens is a balancing act. A child in late elementary or middle school with a phone might look and act like a mini-adult; they might even claim to be one. But they're kids, and teaching responsible technology use in a group setting has been added to our parenting tasks. Maybe sleepovers are a good time to just let kids be kids, without the pressures of texts and social media, without forcing them to grow up faster and in ways we'd never considered 15 years ago.

"I think most families will be happy that you want to unplug the kids," Heitner says. "They get all the risks of connectivity as well and how much fun it will be to be in a space to just relate to your friends and talk all night and whisper and tell jokes."

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Keep Thanksgiving a holiday unto itself

And so it begins. No sooner did I use my thumbnail to scrape a dribble of turkey gravy off my sweater, than — WHOMP! — the Christmas hoopla hit me like a freight train.

On Thanksgiving Day, it was perfectly acceptable, even encouraged, to laze around all day in a tryptophan-induced haze, gorging myself on the day's feast while watching football and glancing noncommittally at a puzzle. But then, less than 12 hours later, a starter pistol was fired, officially signaling the 2018 Holiday Rat Race.

Quite suddenly, and beyond my will, I am expected to run around with a purpose, when all I want to do is nibble leftover pie and play Bananagrams with my kids.

This frenzy begins earlier every year, with "Black Friday" now so diluted with early shopping deals, it has become "Gray November." Nowadays, Christmas commercials, moving window displays and pyramids of fruitcakes and candy canes show up right after Halloween.

The turkey carcass hasn't even been tossed before elves appear on shelves, bell ringers with red kettles show up at storefronts and Bing Crosby croons Mele Kalikimaka.

Thanksgiving, an event commemorating the blessings of harvest and fellowship, is overlooked, lost in the cranberry sauce, squished into one lousy day. (Well, less than a day if you planned to make the doorbuster deal at Macy's.) The prim Pilgrims and drab turkeys don't stand a chance against the glitter, glam and consumerism of the Christmas season.

Must we accept this new normal? Did our culture shift? Is this beyond our control?

Can't we delay the frenzy for a day or two? Why are we in such a rush to hit malls and department stores, which have become Caligula-era coliseums where otherwise mild-mannered citizens use shopping carts like crashing chariots in an epic battle to get that last Fitbit Alta?

Why don't we save a few more days before the annual hemorrhage of our wallets, when we fall prey to pressures to buy a gift for every Tom, Dick, Harry and school janitor? Why not delay the inevitable guilt that comes when we buy something for ourselves when we were supposed to be shopping for Aunt Gertrude?

Can't we all agree to wait a bit longer before attempting to turn the street into the Las Vegas Strip by wrapping our houses in more twinkle lights than the Andromeda Galaxy, lining sidewalks with plastic candy canes and adorning front yards with giant inflatable snow globes?

Soon, our mailboxes will be stuffed with piles of holiday cards containing three-page updates, letters chronicling every significant and insignificant event in the lives of people — and pets — we haven't seen in years. We will soon have to juggle multiple invitations to family holiday parties, school holiday parties, work holiday parties, neighborhood holiday parties, cookie exchanges, secret Santa gift exchanges, elementary school holiday choral concerts, high school holiday drama productions and middle school holiday band concerts (earplugs not included). So why not relax and enjoy the weekend?

Shouldn't we nibble turkey leftovers for two more days, before our bodies begin their slow transformation from reasonably unhealthy to alarming levels of eggnog-triggered cholesterol and Christmas cookie-induced diabetes? Personally, I'd like to put off the rapid expansion of my thighs for as long as possible, for fear that they will cause so much friction I'll spontaneously combust if I walk too fast in my favorite corduroys.

Can't we all just agree to savor Thanksgiving for two more days, for the love of Santa?

With such a short time left before the chaos begins, let's use this time to preemptively rest, relax and brace for the inevitable holiday onslaught we all know is just around the corner.

Take heed, take stock, take two days. And don't call anyone in the morning.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com. Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

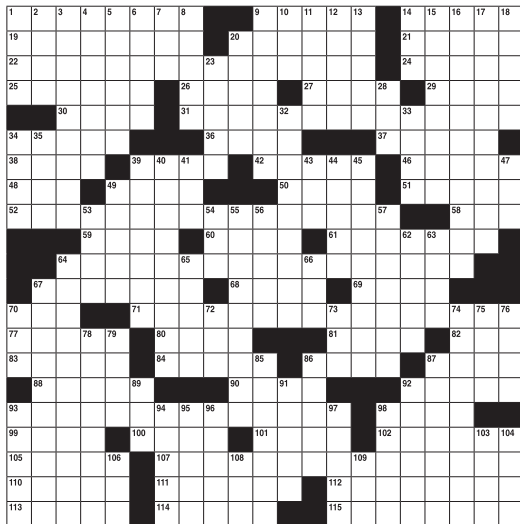
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

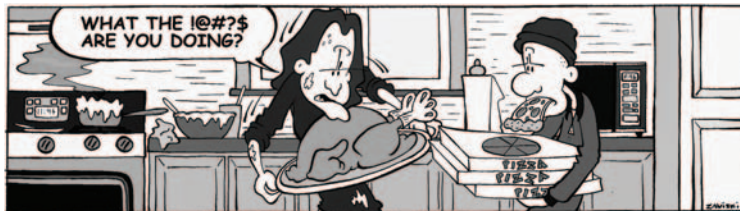
PORTMANFAUX

BY BYRON WALDEN AND JOEL FAGLIANO / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

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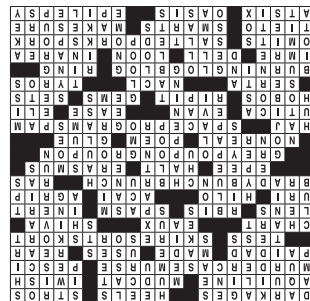


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FACES

Making a house a home

Design guru Joanna Gaines of TV fame puts personal tips, touches in book 'Homebody'

By ALICIA RANCHILO
Associated Press

Joanna Gaines, known for her cozy-yet-cool designs including open-concept floor plans, farmhouse sinks and sliding barn doors, admits having to scale back on the vision of her own home in Waco, Texas, to allow her children to add personality to their own spaces.

"In the past it was hard," she said recently in an interview, having to shift her thinking to, "This is their space. This is what makes them come alive; I need to encourage that."

Gaines says this principle especially applies to her two oldest children, son Drake, 13, and daughter Ella, 11.

"In the main spaces I get to do my thing and incorporate some things that they love, but for their rooms, there's stuff they're wanting in their room that I wouldn't put in there originally, but now it's fun to watch their room evolve into their personality and give them the freedom to do it."

She and her husband, Chip, are planning on a return to TV. The couple confirms they are in discussions with Discovery about creating a lifestyle-focused network.

In the meantime, Gaines writes about how she makes a house a home in her new book, "Homebody: A Guide to Creating Spaces You Never Want to Leave." In it, she shares examples from her farmhouse in Waco, Texas, and homes she's worked on.

She recently talked about design in an interview with The Associated Press.

AP: When you see an empty room, what's the first thing you think about when it comes to decorating?

Gaines: I think, "OK, how are people going to be walking in and out? What's the pass-through? I want the traffic. I kind of just try to figure out the footprint and then I start thinking about, 'Where do you put the sofa? Where do you fit the

chair or a coffee table?' Then from there I start adding the bookshelves, stuff on the wall. But I think for me the seating is important because that's where everyone is congregating. That's the most important thing.

You also find interesting pieces that either show a person's personality or a family heirloom. What if someone doesn't have any of that but wants to add some interesting pieces to their home that aren't so cookie cutter?

People need to know that it takes time. You can find things at flea markets, antique stores or even online. It becomes like a treasure hunt.

You seem to like neutrals and black and white. What are your thoughts on color in design?

I love the contrast of black and white and I think it's timeless and no matter what style or genre, black and white can fit into that. I love to implement color with rugs and pillows and art. But if I'm working with clients who love color, I'm all about a colored sofa or piece of furniture. For me, I love a neutral palette; I think it's calming. But I like keeping it simple and layering colors in later so then when I'm tired of it, I can shift that out simply with a pillow.

What about decorating for the holidays? Do you like themes? What do you like?

Thinking about the farmhouse, I love just layering in the textures, and so it's really simple. Obviously the tree, the garland and the stockings, but simple, subtle colors. That's when there's red, the pillows, the throw blankets, the tree skirt. The holidays can be really busy, and home is a place where we can unwind and rest. If there's too much clutter, I think it's hard for all of us to feel at ease. I try to keep it minimal, but bring in the reds and greens.

When are decorative accents too much?

A lot of this is gut instinct. What I feel is enough may not be enough for others. I think when you're looking at your space and you feel like, "OK, I think I've got it," you can stop.

Joanna Gaines poses Nov. 6 at The Greenwicht Hotel in New York.

Brian Ach, INVISION/AP



Martin finishes a book — but not the one fans want

By STEPHANIE MERRY
The Washington Post

"Game of Thrones" author George R.R. Martin released a new book this week, but it wasn't the one fans have been pining for: "The Winds of Winter," the sixth installment in his "Song of Ice and Fire" series, remains elusive. In its place: "Fire and Blood," a mammoth history of the Targaryen dynasty with all the dragon fire, platinum tresses and shameless inbreeding that readers (and HBO subscribers) would expect.

Before you start griping that Martin has been avoiding the coming winter, know that no one is more frustrated with the "Winds" hold-up than the author.

"I know there are a lot of people out there who are very angry with me that 'Winds of Winter' isn't finished," he told Entertainment Weekly recently. "And I'm mad about that myself. I wished I finished it four years ago. I wished it was finished now. But it's not. And I've had dark nights of the soul where I've pounded my head against the keyboard and said, 'God, will I ever finish this? The show is going further and further forward and I'm falling further and further behind. What the hell is happening here?'"

"The Winds of Winter" release has been forthcoming for some time. Martin's earliest estimates, back when novel five, "A Dance With Dragons," was published in 2011, was that "Winds" would take three years or so to make its way to an impatient public.

Since then, Martin has clearly worked on the novel — he has published or read aloud a number of chapters from the book, which has kept excitement alive and plot theorists busy.

He does have a busy schedule.

In the past, he's chalked up the book delay to the fact that publicity for the series — both written and televised — is all-consuming.

Martin has been careful to explain that "Fire and Blood" is not what fans might be hoping for. (In fact, he's even playfully explained that he didn't write it — it's all the work of Archmaester Gylidays.)

"I do want to stress — indeed, I want to shout ... that FIRE & BLOOD is not a novel," he wrote on his website. "This is not a traditional narrative and was never intended to be."

Before anyone starts complaining about how quickly he turned this book around, he also wants to add that writing it was much easier than working on "Winds."

"Although it covers 150 years or so, it's very straightforward," he said. "In 'Winds' I have like 10 different novels and I'm juggling the timeline ... That's far more complicated."

So let's give some credit where it's due. For a guy who admits to having "problems with deadlines," he has published another major book.

"It's been a long while since I had a new Westeros book, and nobody knows that as well as I do," he said. "So to finish a book that I'm proud of and excited by was emotionally a big lift for me."

Maybe it's just the boost he needs to complete "Winds of Winter." He does seem to have some renewed urgency. According to the Wall Street Journal, he's escaped to a remote cabin where he's forcing himself to finish.



Martin



WILLY SANJUAN, INVISION/AP

Even Spidey gives thanks

Tom Holland, the actor who currently plays Spider-Man for Marvel, had never tasted pumpkin. That changed Wednesday when the 22-year-old British actor got a cooking lesson with "Avengers" co-director Joe Russo, above left, and chef Jessica Largey (behind Russo) at Russo's new restaurant, Simone, in Los Angeles.

"It's hard that I'm starting with probably the best pumpkin I'll ever have," Holland joked.

After the taste test, Holland told the chef, "That was delicious. So I'll come back tomorrow." The actor said he typically spends Thanksgiving in the United Kingdom.

— Marcela Isaaza/AP

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OPINION

NASA's latest gamble worth the \$2B

By ROBERT GEBELHOFF
The Washington Post

I imagine you're trying to decide where to place your peg in a game of Battleship. Except let's change it up a bit. Instead of looking at a small grid, you're scanning an entire planet. And instead of looking for ships, you're trying to find evidence of microscopic life. And let's add another fun twist: There might not even be any actual "targets" for you to find.

Sound like something you'd be willing to bet more than \$2 billion on? Well, NASA's doing it anyway.

This week, NASA announced that it has locked on to the landing site for its next Mars rover, to be launched in 2020. The destination, an area likely to be known as the Jezero crater. It's a hugely expensive gamble intended to uncover the secrets of our planetary neighbor's cryptic past — and it's likely we will end up with more questions than answers.

And yet, this is among the most exciting space missions of our lifetime.

"I think, in the long run, this will be a no-brainer," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator at NASA. As head of the agency's science mission directorate, he's the man who called the multibillion-dollar shot, shaping the search for life beyond our planet for the near future.

Zurbuchen recognizes that the mission comes with risk. NASA plans to land the rover in the crater using a rocket-powered sky crane — a mind-blowing maneuver in which a spacecraft barrels into Mars' atmosphere at breakneck speeds and, with the

help of a parachute and propulsion rockets, slows down just enough to lower the rover onto the surface on cables in midair. Such a landing isn't unprecedented, but engineers refer to the procedure as "seven minutes of terror."

Complicating matters is rough terrain full of boulders and sand dunes. And even if the rover manages to land without a hitch and secure the samples it set out to collect, there's no guarantee that they'll ever be delivered to Earth for study. The plan is to launch another rocket to Mars in the future to retrieve those samples and bring them to Earth, but such missions have yet to be funded.

Zurbuchen also knows that plenty of scientists disagree that Jezero is the best place to look for signs of ancient life on Mars. Others, for example, have proposed returning to the hot springs in the planet's Columbia Hills, where our Spirit rover explored almost a decade ago. Spirit didn't have the tools needed to search for life, but it did find structures similar to those created in part by extremophile bacteria in hot springs on Earth.

But in the end, only one landing site could be chosen, and Jezero was determined to be the best bet.

After all, if evidence of long-lost Martian life exists, it would make sense that it would be somewhere where there was once shallow water — hidden in the dried-up clay of the lake bed.

The Jezero mission is more than just a daunting engineering feat. It represents the first rover mission designed to seek signs of life beyond Earth. And if everything goes according to plan, it will be the

first round-trip mission to another planet — a first step before humans make the trip themselves.

And so, in a way, the mission represents hope. At a time when government can't seem to accomplish very much at all, and when human beings don't seem to agree on even the most basic values, space missions such as this reach for other worlds and promise to do the impossible. The odds for finding evidence of life beyond our atmosphere are low, but they don't keep the most brilliant among our species from trying.

Mars is a dead world — cold and wind-swept with unrelenting storms. For one reason or another, it shed its magnetic field when it was only 500 million years old. Soon thereafter, sunbeams stripped away its atmosphere, drying up its vast oceans and rendering its surface unbearable for any potential life.

Perhaps it never was bearable. Perhaps we've always been alone in this corner of the cosmos. But now, for the first time, we're scrambling together the machinery to test that theory directly.

"These are the things that pivot humanity," Zurbuchen said. "The seafarers who crossed the ocean — is it critical that they did that? Absolutely."

For centuries, humankind has been aiming at targets we don't know exist. But we fire anyway, over the horizon. We might fail to find evidence of life on Mars, but the act of seeking it will be a great accomplishment nonetheless.

Robert Gebelhoff is an assistant editor for The Washington Post's Opinions section.

Elvis built cultural bridges through his music

By GARY ABERNATHY
Special To The Washington Post

When Elvis Presley was included among President Donald Trump's honorees for the Presidential Medal of Freedom, my first thought was, "It's about time," followed by the recognition that it would reignite the popular revisionist claim that Presley "appropriated" black culture and music, a nonsensical allegation that wasn't shared by most of the black artists of the 1950s.

That sentiment is most succinctly summed up by Public Enemy's Chuck D in the 1989 hit "Fight the Power," which includes the line, "Elvis was a hero to most, but he never meant s--- to me." Obviously, Chuck D likewise means nothing to Presley, but the rapper's follow-up line that Presley was "straight up racist" indicates a lack of awareness.

Presley was raised in poverty in the Tupelo, Miss., slums, side-by-side with blacks, and the rhythm and blues and black gospel that influenced him were as much his music as anyone's. It was in his DNA. Far from making a calculated decision to capitalize on it, Presley performed it as naturally as he downed the fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches that his mother prepared as part of her poor family's menu.

And the rhythm merely by instinct, merged rhythm and blues with another genre he loved, country music — white music — to create a brand-new sound. Comparing the rhythm songs like "That's All Right" as originally performed by Arthur Crudup with Presley's version makes clear the creativity and distinction he brought to bear.

Rather than being hailed by critics as an innovator, Presley was initially reviled and shunned by polite society for performing

"race music," embraced only by teenagers of all races. Economists eventually forecast the popular variety shows of the day, hosted by Milton Berle, Steve Allen and, most famously, Ed Sullivan, to relent and feature Presley on their airwaves. Once Presley knocked down the door, multiple black artists stepped through it, suddenly welcome on television and in concert halls.

It is noteworthy that Presley's biggest hit was not a rock 'n' roll number. It was instead a song called "It's Now or Never," based on the operatic "O Sole Mio," making it somewhat surprising that Presley hasn't been accused of appropriating Italian music.

A recent documentary by Eugene Jarecki called "The King" examines Presley's life as a metaphor for America in the age of Trump, with the director implying that the United States is in its "late Elvis" stage — self-indulgent, sick and dying. Among the criticisms from the many celebrities and musicians who are interviewed is that Presley never participated in the civil rights movement. He never marched for the cause.

In fact, Presley participated the only way he ever participated, through his music. Two of his biggest hits — both recorded against the wishes of his management — spoke out against social injustice. "I Can Dream," which Presley used to close his famous 1968 "comeback" TV special on the heels of the assassinations of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, had Presley dreaming "of a better land where all my brothers walk hand in hand." He followed it up the following year with "In the Ghetto," which told the story of "a poor little baby child" born in the ghetto who, by song's end, is gunned down in the street, while "his mama cries."

But what is particularly misleading about

labeling Presley a thief of black music is that it ignores what he truly was. In the month of his death — his embrace and mastery of music in multiple forms, including rock, gospel, country, ballads and pop. His stage performances of the 1970s blended many genres into his distinct vision of the universality of all people. He insisted on being backed up by the black, blues-tinged Sweet Inspirations side by side with the white, gospel melodies of the Imperials and, later, the Stamps Quartet.

During his later years, many of Presley's contemporaries complained that he had abandoned his roots. They wanted him to come out with a five-piece band and perform "That's All Right" and other early hits. But to do so would have made Presley nothing more than another oldies act.

While he always included a sampling of his early hits in his 1970s concerts, Presley focused more heavily on contemporary music, covering a wide range from Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water" to Olivia Newton-John's "Let Me Be There" to Tony Joe White's "Polk Salad Annie." After too many midcareer years of being forced to sing bad movie songs, by the 1970s Presley did what he wanted. If he liked it, he performed it, critics be damned.

By honoring Presley with the Medal of Freedom, Trump may have been playing to the middle America base. But he also paid tribute to someone who arguably did as much to bridge the cultural and racial divide as anyone who ever lived, an impressive and unifying act from someone usually considered the most divisive of presidents.

Gary Abernathy, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, is a freelance writer and former newspaper editor based in Hillsboro, Ohio.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other stateside syndicates.

America's last word on Saudi's conduct shouldn't be Trump's

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump on Tuesday confirmed what his administration has been signaling all along: It will stand behind Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman even if he ordered the brutal murder and dismemberment of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. In a crude statement posted last week with exclamation points, Trump sidestepped a CIA finding that the crown prince was behind the killing, casually slandered Khashoggi, who was one of the Arab world's most distinguished journalists; and repeated gross falsehoods and exaggerations about the benefits of the U.S. alliance with him. Trump's move has betrayed American values in service to what already was a bad bet on the 33-year-old prince.

As with Russian President Vladimir Putin's interference in the 2016 election, Trump is justifying his affinity for a brutal, reckless leader. Trump has misled the findings of the U.S. intelligence community. The Post reported on Nov. 16 that the CIA has concluded with "high confidence" — a rating it does not apply lightly — that Mohammed bin Salman ordered the murder of Khashoggi, who while living in self-imposed exile in Virginia wrote columns for the Post. The Post then was moderately critical of the crown prince.

Trump's response is to grudgingly acknowledge that "it could very well be that the Crown Prince had knowledge of this tragic event" before adding "maybe he did and maybe he didn't." He declares the "fact" that "it is unlikely that this tragedy 'was never known' about all of the facts surrounding the murder."

In fact, the truth about Khashoggi's death is not only knowable but largely known. Audio recordings in the CIA's possession record his actual killing as well as phone calls from the hit team. Mohammed bin Salman's close aides. Five members of the team have been identified as probable members of the crown prince's personal security team.

While discounting these facts, Trump bases his continued backing for the regime on a lie, including his theory that the crown prince "did make some allegedly debunked boasts that Saudi Arabia will 'spend and invest \$450 billion' in the United States.

Worst of all, Trump libels Khashoggi, saying that "representatives of Saudi Arabia" had called him an "enemy of the state" and "an enemy of the United States." The crown prince did make those allegations in a phone call to the White House — but the regime itself was so embarrassed when The Post reported on the call that it denied making them. Khashoggi's family has confirmed that he was not a member of the Brotherhood.

Trump concluded his statement by inviting Congress "to go in a different direction." As in the Russia case, it must do so. Bipartisan legislation mandating sanctions for all those implicated in Khashoggi's death is pending in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Chairman Bob Corker, R-Tenn., said Wednesday he must be indicating he wanted to know "what more would be done" by the administration before Congress responded. Now he knows. If Mohammed bin Salman is to be held accountable, as Corker said he must, the committee must act. The alternative is a world where dictators know they can murder their critics and suffer no consequences.

AG post too important to be filled by Trump's unvetted pick

Los Angeles Times

Alarm bells understandably rang earlier this month when Matthew Whitaker, the chief of staff to fired Attorney General Jeff Sessions, leapfrogged over more senior — and Senate-confirmed — Justice Department officials to become President Donald Trump's acting attorney general.

It's hard to imagine a less reassuring replacement. As a commentator, Whitaker (a former U.S. attorney in Iowa) had questioned the investigation conducted by special counsel Robert Mueller and even suggested that Mueller's appointment smelled "a little fishy." Yet as acting attorney general, Whitaker is positioned to be the ultimate overseer of an investigation that, among other matters, is looking into whether Trump's 2016 campaign illegally colluded with Russia.

Even more ominously, Trump seemed to be in no rush to nominate a new attorney general. Meanwhile, he said over the weekend that he "would not get involved" if Whitaker moved to curtail Mueller's investigation. That's hardly surprising, given that Trump has described the probe as an illegal "witch hunt."

Trump's latest comments underline the importance of enacting legislation to protect Mueller, which Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., personally has refused to advance despite its bipartisan backing. The Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee in April would codify a Justice Department rule that special counsels can be fired only for good cause and would allow a court to appeal his or her dismissal in court. It needs to be enacted.

But Trump's comments, including his praise for Whitaker, point to another problem. By elevating Whitaker, who is not a Senate-confirmed official, the president is violating the spirit and possibly the letter of the Constitution's Appointments Clause. In a lawsuit filed Monday, three Democratic U.S. senators — Richard Blumenthal, of Connecticut; Mazie Hirono, of Hawaii; and Sheldon Whitehouse, of Rhode Island — claim that Whitaker's appointment flouts not only the Constitution but also a statute setting out a line of succession for the Justice Department. Installing a staffer like Whitaker as acting attorney general would be troubling under any circumstances. But with the president's own conduct being scrutinized by Mueller, it's vital that an official confirmed by the Senate have oversight over the probe.

Because Sessions rightly had recused himself from the Russia investigation in light of his role in the 2016 Trump campaign, that oversight had been provided by Sessions' Senate-confirmed deputy, Rod Rosenstein, promptly appointed Mueller. But with Sessions' forced resignation, that authority passes to Whitaker.

Trump has continually raged against the special counsel's investigation, even after it resulted in indictments and guilty pleas. That Sessions' refusal to let Mueller's appointment prompted the president to humiliate and eventually fire a man who was a key supporter during the campaign and who as attorney general faithfully executed the president's policies.

Whatever one thought of Sessions' policy views, he and his opposed most of them. His decision to recuse himself from investigations connected to the 2016 campaign was admirable.

Trump must expeditiously identify a new nominee for attorney general who can be questioned by the Senate early in the investigation. The nominee must be trustworthy, prompt, and honest, and must have integrity. That nominee also should be required, as a condition of confirmation, to promise not to allow political considerations to influence the administration of justice. In the meantime, where the Mueller investigation is concerned, Whitaker is acting as a man who must not recuse himself, which seems unlikely — must show ap-



ARIANA CUBILLOS/AP

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro waves Wednesday during an event marking University Student day at Miraflores Presidential Palace in Caracas.

propriate deference to the judgment of the professionals who have been pursuing this matter since long before his inappropriate elevation.

DeVos rightly protecting rights of the accused on campus

The Wall Street Journal

For those awaiting a restoration of rational discourse in American politics, well, you'll have to keep waiting. No other conclusion is possible after seeing the reaction to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' long-awaited regulatory proposals last week on handling accusations of sexual abuse on campus.

From California Democrat Maxine Waters to Texas Republican Louie Gohmert, with what you are doing. We are organizing to put an end to your destruction of civil rights protections for students."

Former Vice President Joe Biden said on Facebook that the proposal "would return us to the days when schools sweep rape and assault under the rug and survivors were shamed into silence."

The centerpiece of the proposed regulations is — hold your fire — restoring the right of cross-examination, one of the oldest and most hallowed elements of due process.

The Obama Department of Education, responding to legitimate concerns about sexual abuse on campus, issued guidelines that went overboard, casting away many basic protections for the accused. The result has subjected victims and the accused to a system of campus justice often controlled by amateurs and political activists.

For more than four decades the Department of Education has set Title IX policy by issuing "guidance," which circumvents the normal rule-making process. The Obama-era sexual abuse guidance was essentially an administrative dictat. The public had no chance to comment, and universities, under the threat of federal funding was at risk, opted to dilute standard legal protections for accused students.

DeVos has instead followed normal rule-making to create a balance between protecting victims and the rights of the accused. The proposals include "the right of every survivor to be taken seriously and the right of every person accused to know that guilt is not predetermined." Both the alleged victim and the accused would be able to inspect and review all evidence.

All Title IX hearings would include cross-examination, which could occur in person or by live stream, with campus adjudicators allowed to observe the demeanor of witnesses as they assess credibility. The

statements of anyone who refuses cross-examination could not be considered in the final determination. Title IX judges would be required to consider both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence.

One troubling aspect remains. Universities could still use a weaker "preponderance of evidence" as the standard of proof, similar to civil cases, rather than a higher "clear and convincing evidence" standard. DeVos mitigates this somewhat by barring universities from using this lower standard for only sexual assault or harassment if they rely on a higher standard for comparable disciplinary cases.

This is an attempt at compromise, but DeVos will get no credit from the Democratic Party's identity-politics police.

The proposed protections are nonetheless progress, and would go a long way to restore basic norms of fairness and justice to campus courts.

US hard line on Venezuela is justified, but people will suffer

Miami Herald

It appears the Trump administration is ready to add Venezuela to the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism — a country not grata to the United States in Florida, where thousands of refugees of Nicolas Maduro's regime live in exile.

Citing U.S. officials and internal government emails, The Washington Post reported Monday night that the Trump administration is taking the drastic measure against the authoritarian Venezuelan country, officially declaring it an enemy of America. A State Department spokeswoman declined to comment to The Post.

The designation would place Venezuela on a list reserved for governments repeatedly accused of being "a state sponsor of terrorism," like Iran, North Korea, Syria and Cuba. The designation would lead to U.S. sanctions, including Cuba's embargo and removal from the notorious list in 2016 during the Obama administration.

Does Venezuela really qualify as a top danger to America? Yes, according to Miami Republican Sen. Marco Rubio, who has led the push to label Venezuela as such. In fact, the administration's move is reminiscent of likely acting on Rubio's advice. We commend Rubio for his tenacity against a power-hungry dictator who has made a mockery of his country's democracy.

In a letter, Rubio and two Senate colleagues lobbied Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to place the designation on Venezuela, highlighting the regime's links to U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations.

The sanction would be a strong, solid move by the Trump administration against a Latin American strongman who is ruining his country. Maduro is a menace, that is clear. But the designation would also strain U.S. relations with Venezuela and tighten the economic noose by prohibiting any remaining financial transactions between the United States and Venezuela.

But there is a downside — and collateral damage. Unfortunately, the new status would only worsen the already terrible plight of Venezuelans fleeing to the United States. In Caracas, Santos, recently told the Editorial Board. The United States should pair increased aid to help Colombia better absorb the deluge of people with any uptick in sanctions against Venezuela.

Despite jokes that Trump never met a strongman he didn't like, the president has been a vocal supporter of the Venezuelan government and has occasionally fired salvos across Maduro's bow, even hinting that military intervention might be the only way to pry Maduro away from power. That's a threat that should not be made lightly, nor a step that this administration should take. However, stepping up the pressure on Venezuela would be the right move.

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Automotive 140

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Frazz



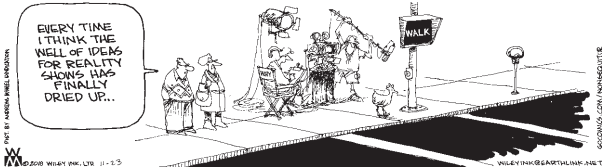
Dilbert



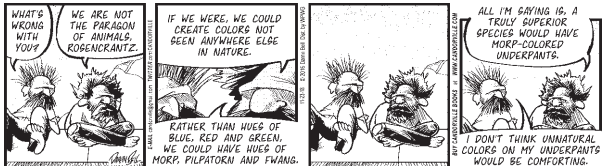
Pearls Before Swine



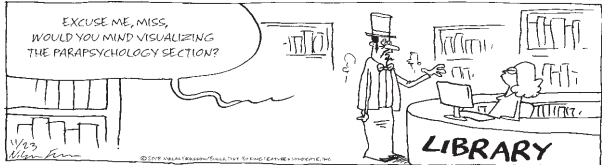
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13			14		
15					16			17		
		18			19			20		
21	22			23				24		
25			26		27	28				
29			30		31			32	33	34
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38	39	40			41		42		43	
44				45				46		
47				48			49		50	51
52				53			54			
55				56			57			

ACROSS

- 1 Musical endings
- 6 Weep
- 9 Frenzied
- 12 Thin pancake
- 13 Shock partner
- 14 "— Were a Rich Man"
- 15 Lieu
- 16 "House of Cards" provider
- 18 Babbles
- 20 Architect
- 21 Saarinen
- 22 Possesses
- 23 Refusals
- 24 Ruhr Valley city
- 25 Faux pas
- 27 Molecule parts
- 29 Got ready for takeoff
- 31 Twosome
- 35 Sports bar fixture
- 37 Dr. McGraw
- 38 NPR reporter
- 41 Grazing land
- 43 British ref. work
- 44 Mayberry boy
- 45 Wee
- 47 Woodstock rocker Jimi
- 49 Hackneyed
- 52 Toss in
- 53 Submachine gun
- 54 Pedro's pal

DOWN

- 5 Code-breaking gp.
- 56 Corn spike
- 57 El Paso native
- 1 IV measures
- 2 Scrap
- 3 Get rid of
- 4 On — with
- 5 Auto style
- 6 Most rational
- 7 Has bills
- 8 Wager
- 9 Odometer
- 10 Blazing
- 11 Mason — Line
- 17 Admit it
- 19 Pond hoppers
- 21 FDR follower
- 22 Mode lead-in
- 24 Comic Philips
- 26 Felt sorry for
- 28 Group of eight
- 30 First lady?
- 32 Capital of Arizona
- 33 Fib
- 34 Days of yore
- 36 Magic potion
- 38 "Over There" composer
- 39 Pundits' pieces
- 40 Sorta
- 42 Facing the pitcher
- 45 Minnelli of "Cabaret"
- 46 Hobbling
- 48 Paris street
- 50 Khan title
- 51 Chaney of horror films

Answer to Previous Puzzle

B	L	O	B	B	R	A	V	E	R
E	A	V	E	O	O	C	O	L	E
A	S	E	A	O	W	L	E	N	I
T	H	R	U	S	T	L	A	T	T
			T	I	C	M	I	R	
O	L	A	Y	A	N	D	Y	C	A
R	I	P		M	O	E		P	R
A	P	P	L	E	P	I	E	S	P
			E	A	T	P	O	E	
J	E	T	S	E	T	D	R	A	G
A	V	I	S		A	M	I	N	O
V	E	T	O		R	A	S	C	A
A	L	E	S		A	S	H	E	D

11-23

CRYPTOQUIP

W UHZO KHXOP AHSX FUHK W

DHWB, HPB PRF OZOTVARBV

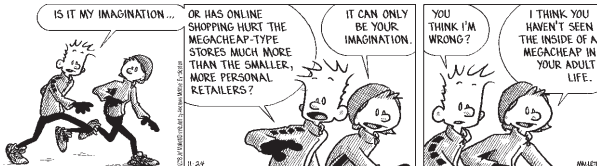
WD BRWP DR. BWB W DKHTK

H SUHP TOKTHSKWRP?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ARE YOU OBSERVING THAT AGITATED GUY OVER THERE EATING THANKSGIVING TURKEY? HE'S HAVING A BIRD!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals H

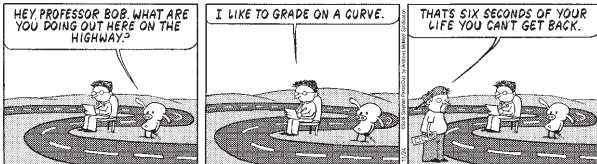
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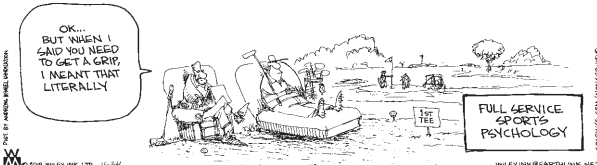
Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



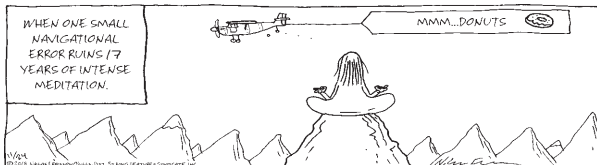
Non Sequitur



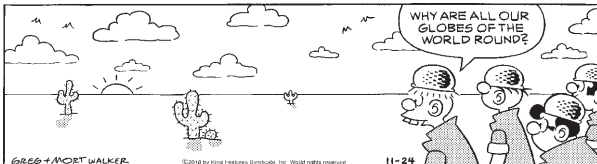
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	
11							12					13
14							15					
16							18				19	
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39							40			41		42
43							44			45		46
47							48			49		50
51										52		
							53			54		

ACROSS

- 1 Mountain crest
- 6 Expos
- 11 Togetherness
- 12 Naked
- 14 Jake of CNN
- 15 Sports venues
- 16 Sort
- 17 Use a diving rod
- 19 Sprite
- 20 Joel or Ethan of Hollywood
- 22 Rebel Turner
- 23 Dating from
- 24 Nixon's veep
- 26 Nation
- 28 Grazing land
- 30 Omega precursor
- 31 Chickens and ducks, e.g.
- 35 Gather
- 39 Unique
- 40 Mauna —
- 42 In — (lined up)
- 43 Computer key
- 44 Grinch creator
- 46 Historic time
- 47 Men's neckwear accessory
- 49 Hot and humid
- 51 Walked boldly
- 52 McDonald's emblem
- 53 Road curves
- 54 Olympic prize

DOWN

- 1 Not digital
- 2 Cal — (baseball's "Iron Man")
- 3 Mentalist's gift
- 4 Three- — sloth inspection
- 5 Noted 2001 bankruptcy
- 6 Inge play
- 7 Initial chip
- 8 TV pioneer
- 9 Firstborn
- 10 Tar
- 11 City near Syracuse
- 13 Cartoon duck
- 18 WWII servicewoman
- 21 Singer Furtado
- 23 Jung's inner self
- 25 Drench
- 27 "Born in the —"
- 29 Dahl and Francis
- 31 Well-versed folks?
- 32 Kind of
- 33 Stomach woes
- 34 One of us
- 36 "Queen of Soul" Franklin
- 37 Reddish-brown horse
- 38 Convinces
- 41 Indian tea region
- 44 Faction
- 45 Foolproof
- 48 Not neg.
- 50 PC screen type

Answer to Previous Puzzle

C	O	D	A	S	S	O	B	M	A	D
C	R	E	P	E	A	W	E	I	F	I
S	T	E	A	D	N	E	T	F	L	I
		P	R	A	T	E	S	E	E	R
H	A	S	N	O	S	E	S	S	E	N
S	L	I	P	A	T	O	M	S		
T	A	X	I	E	D	C	O	U	P	L
		T	V	S	E	T	P	H	I	L
C	O	K	I	E	L	E	A	O	E	D
O	P	I	E	L	I	T	T	L	E	
H	E	N	D	R	I	X	B	A	N	A
A	D	D	U	Z	I	A	M	I	G	O
N	S	A	E	A	R	T	E	X	A	N

11-24

CRYPTOQUIP

DS PJT GFBQ OLJSJTVK

LQBQLQVMQ SJL F MQLEFDV

LJAFV QAOQLJL, NJTYK PJT

MFYY EGFE VQLJ-NJLXGDO?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I HAVE TAKEN BACK WHAT I SAID, AND NOW EVERYBODY IS DOING SO. DID I START A CHAIN RETRACTION?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals R

at Atlanta-New York winner

HIGH SCHOOL: DODEA PACIFIC

ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

Football: Patrick Kelly, Kinnick

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

Life on the football field could not have been much worse for Kinnick, especially their new quarterback, Patrick Kelly.

The junior was making his first varsity start on that sultry Sept. 8 afternoon, and faced a 33-6 deficit with 10 minutes, 52 seconds left. On the road. At Kadena, the Red Devils' biggest rival, which beat Kinnick 10 months earlier for the Division I title.

"I did get a little worried because it was our first game," Kelly said. "I didn't know how it was going to affect us and there was this big deficit. But I thought we could do it."

Treyvion Morton's rushing touchdown with 7:34 left at least made it seem respectable. But the best was yet to come for Kelly and his heroes.

A 53-yard scoring bomb to Kaine Roberts. A 71-yard flanker screen pass for a touchdown to Chris Watson, followed by Morton's 66-yard fumble-return touchdown.

Just like that, the Red Devils were leading 34-33 with 1:58 left, a lead they didn't lose, in a game that Kelly said "set the tone" for the rest of the season — and showed the Red Devils they had a sure-fire replacement for graduated quarterback Kacey Walker.

"He's cool and calm as a cucumber," Kinnick assistant coach Gary Wilson said. "No situation was too big for him. This changed everything for us. We became a passing team."

To the tune of Kelly going 75-for-140 for 1,294 yards and 17 touchdowns for the Red Devils, who finished unbeaten for the first time in 22 seasons and won the Far East Division I title for the first time in school history.

For those accolades, Kelly has been named Stars and Stripes Pacific high school football Athlete of

the Year.

The Red Devils had to come from behind three times in seven regular-season games.

And they did it with a quarterback who saw minimal playing time in 2017, mostly when Kinnick was far ahead, as Walker, a four-year starter, took most meaningful snaps. Still, Kelly was twice named Kinnick's junior varsity MVP, so it wasn't as if he was a greenhorn.

"I knew people were counting on me since Kacey left ... I knew people had a lot of faith in me going into the season. I was just trying to live up to the expectations of everybody else," Kelly said.

Head coach Dan Joley said he had faith from the beginning, even with the Red Devils sporting "the best cast of athletes that may have ever walked the halls of Kinnick" leading to a fast-paced, no-huddle offense that averaged 36.4 points per game.

"His football acumen is incredible," Joley said, adding that Kelly was given the latitude to read defenses and determine the "best path to success" on each play.

Aside from studying film, "he studies personalities and is a master-level people reader who knows how to manage a crowd, especially a crowd of hungry athletes who want to touch the football."

That included Morton, who rushed for 914 yards and 13 scores on 101 carries, and Roberts and Watson, who combined for 44 catches, 1,028 yards and 15 TDs.

They went on to down Kadena 38-20 on Nov. 10 for the Division I title, but it was that first encounter that laid the groundwork for a special season in Red Devil country.

"That was against our toughest opponent and we came back, and that helped us for future games," Kelly said.

ornaue.dave@stripes.com



DAVE ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Setter Mimi Larry changed her delivery during the Far East Division I Tournament finale and helped lead Kubsaki back from the two-set deficit to win the match in five sets.

Volleyball: Mimi Larry, Kubsaki

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

KCAMP FOSTER, Okinawa
Kubsaki was in trouble in the Far East Division I Tournament finals against defending champion Seisen.

Mimi Larry, normally a soft-spoken, calm and cool one, was angry. She had been whistled for carrying or lifting violations throughout the first set.

And it threw her off her game as well as her teammates.

"I was really frustrated; I didn't know what to do," Larry said. "I didn't want to let them (teammates) down. I felt like it was my fault."

Could she try to bump set? That would be OK, except the sets would be hard for the outside hitters to do anything with. And they couldn't utilize any of their quick middle plays with her bump setting.

With the Dragons trailing by 12 points in the second set, coach Mike Hogen spent a timeout — and then came the moment that Hogen said was one of the top moments in his 10 years of coaching the Dragons.

"I asked her if she could change her delivery right now," Hogen recalled. "She said yes. That she had the ability to change her technique in the middle of a match. And she told the team that we were going to win now, that

everything was OK now."

The Dragons had gone unbeaten the entire regular season, and only lost one set, in Far East D-I pool play to American School in Japan, when they arrived at that moment.

But after losing the first two sets, 23-25, 20-25, to the Phoenix, it was all Dragons, who stormed back to take the next three sets 25-16, 25-16, 25-10 and their fourth title in five years.

Along the way, Larry, one of only two four-year starters for Hogen in those 10 seasons, was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. She averaged 8.16 assists per set and had 43 in the match against Seisen, and also averaged 2.38 digs per set.

That championship match was the caper, Larry said, to a season that truly had begun, she said, with the third-place match in the 2017 Far East tournament. Kubsaki won that one and, Larry said, the Dragons as a team "could not wait" for the next practice come August.

"She cares so much about how the team feels," Hogen said. "She wants the team to do well, to feel good, be satisfied and have good camaraderie. It was a good process, a good journey."

Now that it's over, "it doesn't feel like it's over," Larry said, "that I've finally finished four years of playing here."

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DAVE ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Quarterback Patrick Kelly, left, guided Kinnick to its first Division I title.

NHL

Around the league

Teams not afraid to fire coaches early

With four new coaches, the league has already matched last season's turnover total

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

Peter Chiarelli didn't feel like he could wait another day.

The Edmonton general manager didn't sleep well after another tough loss, put the wheels in motion to replace coach Todd McLellan with Ken Hitchcock and made the move on Tuesday — a game day. After a non-in-season coaching changes around the NHL last season, there have now been four in less than three weeks.

The standings are still so close and volatile that it's almost never too soon to decide to fire an NHL coach.

"Unfortunately as it is, that's the way it's trending," Chiarelli said. "The margins are thin and you look for edges and that's one of them."

Los Angeles fired John Stevens on Nov. 4. Chicago fired three-time Stanley Cup winner Joel Quenneville two days later. St. Louis dismissed Mike Yeo late Monday and Edmonton followed suit with McLellan on Tuesday morning. The Kings had played 13 games, the Blackhawks 15, the Blues 19 and the Oilers 20, but it is no longer surprising to see such a drastic move before the quarter mark of the season.

Hall of Fame defenseman Scott Stevens, now an NHL Network analyst, won the Stanley Cup as a player after a late-season coaching change and took over as co-head coach with New Jersey during the 2014-15 season. He said he was only caught off guard by Quenneville's firing and understands why so many GMs are pulling the trigger so early.

"I think a lot of times the GM has the pulse of everything that's going on and knows when the time's right to make that move," Stevens said. "I believe every team thinks they have a chance to win the Stanley Cup. ... Everyone feels they have a chance to win, and sometimes you just need a little luck."

Or at least a big change.

"You can't trade every player, so they fire the coach to try to get everybody's attention," NBC Sports analyst Pierre McGuire said.

The calendar got Chiarelli's attention because Thanksgiving typically serves as a barometer of which teams will make the playoffs. It's an uphill climb for Hitchcock, the Kings' Willie Desjardins, Blackhawks' Jeremy Collin and Blues' Craig Berube to try to lift their teams out of rough starts and make it.

Sometimes, interim or replacement coaches are wildly successful after arriving during the season. The Penguins in 2009 with Dan Bylsma and 2016 with Mike Sullivan and the Kings in 2012 with Darryl Sutter won the Cup. The Flyers in 2010 with Peter



Craig Berube, left, speaks during a news conference alongside St. Louis Blues general manager Doug Armstrong after Berube was named interim head coach of the team Tuesday. The Blues fired head coach Mike Yeo.



JASON FRANZON, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Todd McLellan, in his fourth season as the head coach at Edmonton, was fired on Tuesday.

Lavolette reached the final.

McGuire, himself a midseason replacement with the Hartford Whalers in the 1990s, said he believes this recent run of firings has something to do with the Vegas Golden Knights reaching the Final last season as an expansion team, causing frustration around the league about quick results. Still, early season coach firings are a time-tested part of the NHL.

"Coaching changes right around this time made huge differences," McGuire said. "People look at this over history and they say this can happen. Pittsburgh and L.A. are good examples of that."

Upperhand shorthanded: The

Arizona Coyotes have killed off a league-best 91.7 percent of power plays, and their 10 short-handed goals are six more than the next-closest team. Michael Grabner has four goals, Brad Richardson three, and Arizona has only allowed five power-play goals through its first 19 games.

Coach Rick Tocchet said Grabner, Richardson and his other penalty killers have done an excellent job of applying pressure with three players and the fourth making smart reads to take it the other way.

"Especially for PK guys, they really have a good hockey IQ on knowing when to attack pressure," Tocchet said. "The guys have done a nice job, like Rich-

Did you know

There have been four coaching changes this season, already matching last season's total:

- Los Angeles Kings replaced John Stevens with Willie Desjardins
- Chicago Blackhawks replaced Joel Quenneville with Jeremy Collin
- St. Louis Blues replaced Mike Yeo with Craig Berube
- Edmonton Oilers replaced Todd McLellan with Ken Hitchcock

SOURCE: Associated Press

ardson and Grabner especially, of making really good reads on when there's a time to pressure and where that read is going to be. Sometimes you guess wrong but I think this year we've done a nice job guessing right."

Game of the week: The defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals on Saturday visit the New York Rangers, who have been among the league's biggest surprises.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division						
Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA
Tampa Bay	22	12	5	5	31	63/54
Toronto	22	15	7	0	30	76/58
Buffalo	22	10	9	3	23	70/62
Boston	21	11	6	4	26	60/52
Montreal	22	11	7	4	26	72/75
Detroit	21	10	9	2	22	68/67
Ottawa	22	9	10	3	21	79/94
Florida	20	8	8	4	19	64/69

Metropolitan Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA
Columbus	22	12	8	2	26	68/65
N.Y. Rangers	22	12	8	2	26	68/65
Washington	21	11	7	3	25	72/69
Carolina	21	10	8	3	23	58/61
N.Y. Islanders	20	10	8	2	22	63/60
New Jersey	20	9	8	3	20	68/63
Pittsburgh	20	8	8	4	20	69/67
Philadelphia	21	9	10	2	20	65/76

Western Conference

Central Division						
Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA
Nashville	22	16	5	1	33	74/50
Minnesota	22	12	9	1	28	71/61
Winnipeg	20	12	6	2	26	64/54
Colorado	21	11	6	4	26	78/62
Dallas	22	11	9	2	24	68/59
Chicago	22	8	9	5	21	58/74
St. Louis	20	7	8	5	17	57/63

Pacific Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA
Calgary	22	12	7	3	27	75/65
San Jose	22	11	7	4	26	71/68
Anaheim	22	9	9	4	22	52/68
Vancouver	21	10	12	2	22	73/88
Edmonton	21	10	10	1	21	61/69
Vegas	23	10	12	1	21	61/70
Arizona	20	9	9	2	20	51/51
Los Angeles	21	7	13	2	15	44/68

Notes: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

No games scheduled

Wednesday's games
Carolina 5, Toronto 2
N.Y. Rangers 5, N.Y. Islanders 0
Pittsburgh 5, Dallas 1
Washington 4, Chicago 2
New Jersey 5, Montreal 2
Tampa Bay 7, Florida 3
Buffalo 5, Philadelphia 2
Detroit 3, Boston 2, OT
Arizona 6, Ottawa 4
Nashville 4, St. Louis 1
Vegas 3, Arizona 2, OT
Calgary 6, Winnipeg 3
Anaheim 4, Vancouver 3
Colorado 7, Los Angeles 3

Thursday's games

Friday's games
N.Y. Rangers at Philadelphia
Montreal at Buffalo
Winnipeg at Minnesota
Edmonton at Anaheim
Detroit at Washington
Toronto at New Jersey
Calgary at Vegas
Toronto at Columbus
Chicago at Tampa Bay
Florida at Carolina
Pittsburgh at Boston
Nashville at St. Louis
Ottawa at Dallas
Colorado at Arizona
Vancouver at San Jose

Saturday's games

Washington at N.Y. Islanders
Buffalo at Detroit
Chicago at Florida
Boston at Montreal
Philadelphia at Toronto
Carolina at N.Y. Islanders
Dallas at Colorado
San Jose at Vegas
Vancouver at Los Angeles
Calgary at Arizona
New Jersey at Tampa Bay
Anaheim at Nashville
Edmonton at Los Angeles

NHL leaders

Goal scoring

Name	Team	GP	G
David Fennak	Boston	21	15
Alex Ovechkin	Washington	21	15
Jeff Skinner	Buffalo	22	15
Flori Forberg	Nashville	22	14
Nathan MacKinnon	Colorado	21	14
Brayden Point	Tampa Bay	22	14
John Tavares	Toronto	22	14
Sam Atkinson	Columbus	20	13
Leon Draisaitl	Edmonton	20	13
Patrick Kane	Winnipeg	20	13
Gabriel Landeskog	Colorado	21	13
Connor McDavid	Edmonton	21	13
Joe Pavelski	San Jose	22	13
Patrick Kane	Chicago	21	12
Timothy Lajunen	Rangers	22	12
Timothy Meier	San Jose	22	12
Sean Monahan	Calgary	22	12
Joey Palmieri	New Jersey	20	12

Assists

Name	Team	GP	A
Mikko Rantanen	Colorado	21	26
David Fennak	Boston	22	22
Blake Wheeler	Winnipeg	20	22
Brent Burns	San Jose	22	20
Evgeni Malkin	Pittsburgh	22	20
Johnny Gaudreau	Calgary	22	19
Nicklas Backstrom	Washington	21	18
John Gaudreau	Washington	21	18
Mark Giordano	Calgary	22	18
Nikita Kucherov	Tampa Bay	22	18
Connor McDavid	Edmonton	21	18
Sebastian Aho	Carolina	21	17

Penalty minutes

Name	Team	GP	PP
Patrice Bergeron	Winnipeg	21	8
David Pastrnak	Boston	21	8
Alex Ovechkin	Washington	21	7
Evgeni Kuznetsov	Washington	21	6
Connor McDavid	Edmonton	21	6
Brayden Point	Tampa Bay	22	6

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Oklahoma wishbone legends in awe of QB Murray

Dual-threat star stirs memory of Switzer's triple-option wizards

By CLIFF BRUNT
Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — Oklahoma wishbone masters Jamelle Holieway and Charles Thompson get nostalgic when they watch Kyler Murray bring an electric quarterback run element to coach Lincoln Riley's Air Raid offense.

Holieway led Oklahoma to a national championship as a freshman in 1985. He rushed for 2,713 yards in his career, the most of any quarterback at the school. Thompson, perhaps the most athletically gifted of coach Barry Switzer's triple-option wishbone wizards, led the Sooners to the verge of a national title in 1987.

Murray may be better. In addition to having one of the most efficient passing seasons in college football history, Murray has rushed for 739 yards and 10 touchdowns this season — the most rushing yards for an Oklahoma quarterback since Thompson ran for 824 yards in 1988.

Thompson sees Murray as the only Oklahoma quarterback who has ever been elite enough as a runner and accurate enough as a passer that he could have starred in both the wishbone and Air Raid eras.

"I'm in awe of what I see him doing," Thompson said. "I can very easily see him dragging the toe and riding the fullback like we used to do in the old days."

Murray's speed is key, he said Monday that he ran a 4.3-second



SUE OGROCK/AP

Kyler Murray and No. 6 Oklahoma meet No. 12 West Virginia on Friday with the winner headed to the Big 12 championship game. Murray has rushed for 739 yards and 10 touchdowns this season — the most rushing yards for a Sooners QB since Charles Thompson ran for 824 yards in 1988.

40-yard dash earlier in the year. Drafted ninth overall by the Oakland A's in the 2018 Major League Baseball draft, Murray had a 67-yard touchdown run against Texas and a 75-yard scoring run against Kansas.

"He reminds me of me, but a whole lot faster," Holieway said. "He has that breakaway speed. That makes all the difference."

West Virginia (8-2, 5-2 Big 12)

will have to deal with Murray on Friday in what will determine who plays for the Big 12 title. The 12th-ranked Mountaineers know all about Murray's speed — he busted loose for a 66-yard run on the first play of Oklahoma's 59-31 win last year.

"The quarterback's hard to tackle," West Virginia coach Dana Holgorsen said. "He's really, really, really quick. I hear

he's a good baseball player. If he's better at baseball than he is at football, it's unreal. You've got to contain him. You're not going to stop him. You're not going to get hits on him. You've just got to contain him."

Murray doesn't run all the time, either, allowing for the element of surprise. He ran for 99 yards and three touchdowns on just eight carries in the Sooners'

'He reminds me of me, but a whole lot faster.'

Jamelle Holieway

former Oklahoma quarterback, who rushed for 2,713 yards in his career, most of any quarterback at the school

55-40 victory over Kansas last Saturday.

"For me, my job is to deliver the ball to my teammates through the pocket," he said. "When stuff breaks down, I've got the ability to make something happen."

Thompson, who averaged 5.9 yards per carry in his career and finished with 1,584 yards rushing in two seasons, said Murray is in the same category of speed as he was.

"Just his explosion and first-step movement," Thompson said. "And when he makes a decision to go, it's go. It's not, 'I'm going to think about it,' or 'I'm trying to get there.' It's, 'I'm getting there.'"

Murray's execution of the zone-read option out of the shotgun looks like an updated version of days gone by at Oklahoma.

"There's times when he has openings or he has a zone-read play where (defenses) collapse on the back and he doesn't pull it," West Virginia defensive coordinator Tony Gibson said. "And there's times where they do account for him and he pulls it and he'll make a guy miss. There's nothing that gives it away when he's going to take off or when he's not."

Thompson calls Murray's skills "uncanny."

"It's the ability to have vision and make people miss," Thompson said. "And it's not something you can coach, man. It's natural."

No. 8 UCF has goals beyond beating archrival South Florida

By FRED GOODALL
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — No. 8 UCF isn't content with having the nation's longest winning streak. The Knights want more. A lot more.

The defending American Athletic Conference champions can complete a second consecutive undefeated regular season by beating intrastate rival South Florida on Friday.

Next on their list of goals is winning the AAC championship game — which they'll host on Dec. 1 — to remain in the conversation about which teams are deserving of berths in the College Football Playoff.

"From where this program's come, it's just getting started," quarterback McKenzie Milton said. "I think we're just scratching the surface and UCF is going to be good for a very, very long time."

First-year coach Josh Heupel, who inherited a team that went 13-0 but was left out of the CFP last season, said:

"This is the most unique story in college football in my opinion because it's continuing to build what it's going to be," Heupel said. "Blue-blood programs were built in the 30s, 40s and 50s. We're right in the midst of what's going on here."

And the rest of the country is taking notice, especially after last week's 38-13 rout of Cincinnati in a prime-time matchup



PHILAN M. EBENHACK/AP

Central Florida quarterback McKenzie Milton throws against Navy in Orlando, Fla., earlier this month. No. 8 UCF isn't content with having the nation's longest winning streak — the defending AAC champions can complete a second consecutive undefeated regular season by beating rival South Florida on Friday.

capping a day in which ESPN's "College GameDay" broadcast from Orlando for the first time.

"Waking up in the morning ... turning the TV on and seeing it's in Orlando on UCF's campus on Memory Mall, that was unreal ... a childhood dream to me," senior defensive lineman Joey Connors said.

The Knights (10-0, 7-0) climbed three spots in the AP Poll this week and will face the winner of Friday's game between Houston and Memphis in the AAC title game. South Florida (7-4, 3-4) has lost four straight following a 7-0 start that propelled the Bulls into the Top 25.

"Central Florida's playing with a lot of confidence, something we don't have right now," South Florida coach Charlie Strong said.

"When you start winning, when you start playing with confidence, you feel like no one's going to beat you," Strong added. "That's what they have going on right now."

Some other things to know about the Knights and Bulls:

I-4 rivalry: The schools are situated about 90 minutes apart, with Interstate 4 connecting Orlando and Tampa.

The series, which USF leads 6-3, has been dubbed the "War on I-4." Since 2016, the winner has been presented with a traveling trophy that's 4-foot, 3 inches tall and

weighs 160 pounds.

Memorable game: UCF won a 49-42 thriller at home in Orlando. USF's Quinton Flowers had 605 yards total offense and the Bulls rallied to tie the score 42-40 on the quarterback's 83-yard scoring pass to Darnell Solomon and a two-point conversion with 1:41 remaining.

The Knights went ahead for good when Mike Hughes returned the ensuing kickoff 95 yards for a touchdown.

"You had two teams evenly matched, and it came down to a kickoff return," Strong said. "If we would have covered it better, who knows what might have happened."

Potent offense: Milton, eighth in Heisman Trophy balloting a year ago, has thrown for 2,577 yards and 24 touchdowns. UCF is sixth in the nation in total offense (528.9 yards per game) and scoring (43.6) and has scored at least 30 points in 23 consecutive games. That's the second-longest streak since 1936. South Florida led it 24 straight times from 2015-17.

USF has allowed 57, 41, 35 and 27 in losses to Houston, Tulane, Cincinnati and Temple during its longest skid since 2013.

"It's a lot of home run balls for them," Strong said. "We can't allow them to take the ball and pitch it over our heads for 60, 70-yard plays. If anything, you've got to make them drive the ball and you've got to be great in the red zone."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Top 25 schedule

Thursday
No. 22 Mississippi State at Mississippi
Friday
No. 6 Oklahoma at No. 12 West Virginia
No. 7 Washington State vs. No. 16 Washington
No. 8 UCF at South Florida
No. 11 Texas at Kansas
Saturday
No. 1 Alabama vs. Auburn
No. 2 Clemson vs. South Carolina
No. 3 Notre Dame at Southern Cal
No. 4 Michigan at No. 10 Ohio State
No. 5 Georgia vs. Georgia Tech
No. 8 LSU at Texas A&M
No. 13 Florida at Florida State
No. 14 Utah State at No. 21 Boise State
No. 15 Penn State vs. Maryland
No. 17 Kentucky at Louisville
No. 18 Utah vs. BYU
No. 19 Syracuse at Boston College
No. 20 Northwestern vs. Illinois
No. 24 Pittsburgh at Miami
No. 25 Iowa State vs. Kansas State

Service academies

Thursday vs. Colorado St.
Last week: Lost to Wyoming 35-27

does not play
Last week: Beat Colgate, 28-14

at Tulane
Last week: Beat Tulsa, 37-29

Power Five standings

ACC			
Atlantic	Conf.	Overall	
Clemson	0-2	11-9	
Syracuse	0-2	8-3	
NC State	4-0-3	7-7	
Boston College	4-0-3	7-7	
Florida State	0-5	2-9	
Wake Forest	0-5	2-9	
Louisville	0-5	2-9	

Coastal			
Pittsburgh	6-1	7-4	
Georgia Tech	4-4	7-4	
Virginia	4-4	7-4	
Duke	3-4	7-4	
Miami	3-4	7-4	
Virginia Tech	3-4	7-4	
North Carolina	3-4	7-4	

Big 12			
Oklahoma	7-1	10-1	
West Virginia	6-2	9-2	
Texas	6-2	9-2	
Iowa State	5-3	8-3	
TCU	5-3	8-3	
Baylor	5-3	8-3	
Kansas State	5-3	8-3	
Texas Tech	5-3	8-3	
Oklahoma State	3-5	6-6	
Kansas	1-7	2-10	

Big Ten			
East			
Michigan	9-0	10-1	
Ohio State	7-3	10-2	
Purdue	7-3	10-2	
Michigan State	4-4	6-6	
Indiana	4-4	6-6	
Notre Dame	0-6	5-7	
West			
Northwestern	7-1	7-4	
Wisconsin	5-3	7-4	
Iowa	4-4	7-4	
Iowa State	4-4	7-4	
Nebraska	3-5	4-7	
Illinois	2-6	5-6	

Pac-12			
North			
Washington State	7-1	10-1	
Washington	6-2	8-3	
Stanford	6-2	8-3	
Oregon	4-4	7-4	
California	4-4	7-4	
Oregon State	1-7	2-9	
South			
Utah	6-3	8-3	
Arizona	5-3	6-6	
Utah State	5-3	6-6	
USC	4-4	6-6	
LSU	2-6	5-6	
Colorado	2-6	5-6	

SEC			
East			
Georgia	7-1	10-1	
Kentucky	7-1	8-3	
Florida	5-3	8-3	
South Carolina	4-4	7-4	
Missouri	3-4	7-4	
Tennessee	2-6	5-6	
Vanderbilt	2-6	5-6	
West			
Alabama	7-0	11-0	
LSU	5-2	9-2	
Texas A&M	5-2	9-2	
Mississippi State	3-4	7-4	
Arkansas	3-4	7-4	
Mississippi	1-6	2-9	
Arkansas	0-7	2-9	



JACK DEMPSEY/AP

Utah State running back Darwin Thompson jumps over Colorado State cornerback Rashad Ajayi during last week's game, in Fort Collins, Colo. No. 14 Utah State travels to No. 21 Boise State for a Mountain West Conference showdown on Saturday (4:15 a.m. Sunday, CET; 12:15 p.m. Sunday, JKT, AFN-Sports2).

Key Power Five matchups

No. 4 Michigan at No. 10 Ohio State
6 p.m. Saturday, CET
2 a.m. Sunday, JKT
AFN-Sports

Series record: Michigan leads 58-49-6.
What's at stake?: A win for Michigan followed by a defeat of Northwestern in the conference championship game likely puts the Wolverines in the College Football Playoff. A win for Ohio State over its hated rival will help save last month's unexpected loss to Purdue and at least keep the Buckeyes in the playoff conversation if they go on to win the Big Ten. Ohio State has won the last six meetings.

Key matchup: Ohio State QB Dwayne Haskins Jr. vs. Michigan's defense. Haskins entered last year's game in the third quarter after J.T. Barrett was injured and drove the Buckeyes 60 yards for the go-ahead touchdown and an eventual 31-20 win. As the Ohio State starter this season, Haskins is in the process of breaking most of the school's single-season passing records. Michigan has the best defense in the country.

Players to watch: Michigan QB Shea Patterson. The Ole Miss transfer has given Michigan stability at quarterback, piling up 2,177 passing yards with 18 touchdowns and just four interceptions.

Ohio State RB J.K. Dobbins. He and fellow tailback Mike Weber have had a couple of good games since the Buckeyes figured out how to get their running game unglued after it got stuck in the middle of the season.

Facts & figures: The status of Michigan DE Chase Winovich, injured in Saturday's game against Indiana, is uncertain. ... Injured Ohio State players Weber, OL Thayer Munford and LB Baron Browning all should be available. ... The longest winning streak in the series was nine by Michigan from 1901-09. ... Michigan hasn't beaten Ohio State in Columbus since 2000. ... Since 2012 at least one of the teams has come into the game ranked in the top 10. ... The 2017 game played in Columbus was a double-overtime 30-27 win by the Buckeyes that sent them to the playoff.

Auburn at No. 1 Alabama
9:30 p.m. Saturday, CET
5:30 a.m. Sunday, JKT
AFN-Sports

Series record: Alabama leads 45-36-1.
What's at stake?: Alabama wants to complete a perfect regular season and avenge a loss that kept the Crimson Tide from a shot at the Southeastern Conference title last season. The Tigers can largely change perception of a disappointing season with an upset.

Key matchup: Auburn's offensive line versus Alabama's defensive front. The Tigers have struggled to open running room and protect quarterback Jarrett Stidham this season. The Tide lead the SEC with 37 sacks, powered by Isaiah Buggs and Quinnen Williams.

Players to watch: Auburn WR Anthony Schwartz. He is a speedster and one of the team's freshman playmakers. The Tigers need him to produce big plays running and/or receiving.

Alabama DT Quinnen Williams. He is one of the top defensive players in the country. A run-stopper who can also apply pressure up the middle, the former Auburn commit has 15 tackles for loss and six sacks.

Facts & figures: Auburn leads the series 7-4 in Tuscaloosa. ... The Tide have defeated 81 consecutive unranked opponents, the longest streak in FBS history. The last unranked team to beat Alabama: Auburn, 17-10 on Nov. 24, 2007. ... Alabama coach Nick Saban is 4-1 in the Iron Bowl at Bryant-Denny Stadium. Auburn's Gus Malzahn has a 2-3 mark in the game. ... Alabama has allowed only five rushing touchdowns while Auburn has been nearly as stingy, giving up six TDs on the ground. ... Jarrett Stidham-to-Ryan Davis has passed Pat Sullivan-to-Terry Beasley for most pass connections for an Auburn duo with 145. ... Freshmen have accounted for 197 of Auburn's 318 points (61.9 percent).

No. 3 Notre Dame at USC
2 a.m. Sunday, CET
10 a.m. Sunday, JKT
AFN-Sports

Series record: Notre Dame leads 47-37-5.
What's at stake?: The Fighting Irish can lock up a spot in the College Football Playoff, ideally avoiding No. 1 Alabama (No. 1 CFP) in the semifinals, by completing their 10th undefeated regular season since 1945. The Trojans must win to become bowl eligible and avoid becoming the fourth USC team since 1962 to finish with a losing record.

Key matchup: Notre Dame RB Dexter Williams vs. USC's rush defense. Williams has run for at least 142 yards and one touchdown in four of the seven games he has played this season. The senior, who has seven runs of 30 yards or longer, now faces a Trojans defense that allowed 289 yards rushing to UCLA's Joshua Kelley in its last game. USC has given up 200 yards on the ground in three of its past five games.

Players to watch: Notre Dame DE Julian Okwara. The junior defensive lineman leads the Irish with 10½ tackles for loss, including 4½ sacks in his past four games.

USC WR Amara-Ra St. Brown. The freshman receiver leads the Trojans with 50 receptions for 656 yards. St. Brown's older brother, Equanimeous, played for Notre Dame from 2015-17.

Facts & figures: Notre Dame QB Ian Book ranks second in the FBS with a 72.6 completion percentage. ... USC is 4-10-1 against a Notre Dame team without a loss or tie. ... Irish K Justin Yoon has made 57 career field goals, tied with Kyle Brinzla for most in school history. ... USC WR Michael Pittman Jr. has 23 receptions for 377 yards and five touchdowns in his past four games. ... The home team has won each of the past five games in the series for the Jeweled Shillelagh. ... USC hadn't lost in 19 straight games at the Coliseum under coach Clay Helton until losing its last two in a row. ... Helton's status with the Trojans is unclear one year after winning the Pac-12.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Tranquill helps ND to cusp of playoffs

By JOHN FINERAN
Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — The rectangular medal with the Notre Dame leprechaun etched on it along with the inscription "Effort Toughness Leadership Commitment" is on a chain around the neck of 65-year-old Keith Penrod, a gift from linebacker Drue Tranquill.

Penrod, familiar to many fans for his lifelong devotion to Notre Dame athletics, has battled cerebral palsy since birth but has also recently been rehabbing a broken ankle that has kept him away from the team and players he loves.

"Tell Drue I love him," Penrod said recently with a laugh on his angled face, with his crooked fingers cradling the gift he received from Tranquill, who received it from Matt Balis, the team's director of football performance, for his work prior to the 2017 season.

The gift and friendship between the 23-year-old team captain and the elderly fan doesn't surprise Tranquill's teammates or his coach, Brian Kelly. Tranquill's emergence as a team leader in his final season at Notre Dame has been compelling to watch. He's had to work hard, too.

"I think what people don't recognize is his growth as a teammate from last year to this year has been amazing," Kelly said. "It's hard to imagine being Drue Tranquill — an engineering student, a great player, a great citizen [who is] great in the community [and] spiritually. He was almost too hard to ignore and almost too hard to mirror."

"This year he's still that, but he's so close to his teammates. They see the same guy every day. He comes in, he works out, he trains, he fights through injuries. They don't see all those other things. They see a guy that is so committed to being successful that they can mirror that."

Do they ever.

"Drue has instilled his toughness in all of us," junior cornerback Julian Love said.

On a high note or a low day, you're going to get the same guy, fellow linebacker Te'von Coney said.

"Drue and I came in together," center Sam Mustipher said. "I know the things he's been through, the adversity he's fought through. He deserves it."

It has been quite a year for the third-ranked Irish (11-0, No. 3 CFP) and Tranquill, who married his Fort Wayne Carroll High School sweetheart, Jackie Gindt, in July. A few weeks later, Tranquill and fellow captains Mustipher, Alex Babin and Jaxx Newsum led the Irish through five hot days of preseason workouts at Culver Academy and now 11 straight victories to set the table for a possible spot in the playoff. A single regular-season game remains, against long-time rival Southern California on Saturday at the Coliseum.

"This season has gone fast — you blink your eye and it's over," Tranquill said Tuesday after practice. "The days are long, but the season is short. Now we're playing our last game of the regular season, so let's go out and win a ball game."

Last week at Yankee Stadium against then-No. 12 Syracuse, Tranquill had perhaps his best game of the season with seven tackles, including two sacks, despite leaving the game twice with an injured ankle. It's been a familiar if unwelcome theme for Tranquill.

After arriving on campus as a freshman safety, in 2014, he tore the ACL in his left knee against Louisville and the following year against Georgia Tech he tore the ACL in his right knee. Following a 4-8 season in 2016, Kelly restructured his staff and new defensive coordinator Mike Elko moved Tranquill to the rover spot in Notre Dame's 4-2-5 defense.

Tranquill responded with 85 tackles (44 solos) and three fumble recoveries for the 10-3 Irish and then decided to return for a fifth season that's had more bumps and bruises. Despite suffering a broken hand on the first series against Stanford on Sept. 29 and then having his ankle rolled in Notre Dame's win over Navy on Oct. 27, the 6-foot-2, 235-pound Tranquill is tied with free safety Alohi Gilman with 66 tackles, 52 of them unassisted, trailing only Coney for the team lead.

"This season has been a dream of mine," Tranquill said. "To be in this position, to still have the dream, to still have that dream within reach is special."

A May 2018 graduate with a 3.73 grade-point average in mechanical engineering, Tranquill is one of 13 finalists for the National Football Foundation's William V. Campbell Trophy and \$25,000 postgraduate scholarship. He's also a finalist for the Wuerffel Trophy presented to the player who combines community service with athletic and academic achievement. Tranquill, who has made mission trips to the Dominican Republic, works with Dream Teams, a mentoring program with South Bend's elementary schools.



PAUL SANCIA/AP

Notre Dame linebacker Drue Tranquill, who has suffered a broken left hand and high right ankle sprain, has remarkably missed just a few plays for the Fighting Irish this season.



PAUL SANCIA/AP

Michigan quarterback Shea Patterson transferred from Ole Miss after the program was penalized by the NCAA for violations. He's put the Wolverines in position to earn a spot in the College Football Playoffs.

Making a difference

QB Patterson gives Michigan unfamiliar dynamic for OSU

By LARRY LAGE
Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Shea Patterson's parents took him out for a sushi dinner and to see the movie "Overlord," hoping to get Michigan's quarterback away from his relentless preparation for the biggest game of his life.

"We didn't talk about football," Sean Patterson said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "It was just nice to see him sitting with his mom and eating popcorn. We wanted to give him a break from studying film."

No. 10 Ohio State has been watching some film, too, watching what Patterson has done with the fourth-ranked Wolverines this season. The Buckeyes see a dual-threat quarterback who looks nothing like the players Jim Harbaugh had under center the previous three years — all Ohio State wins.

"In past years, they haven't had a running quarterback like him," Buckeyes defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones said. "He creates his own new dynamic we have to worry about."

The Wolverines are favored to win Saturday in the Horseshoe — where they haven't won since 2000 — at least in part because of an offseason victory that made Patterson eligible to play right away. He decided to transfer from Ole Miss nearly a year ago to Michigan, but he had to wait until April to find out the NCAA was granting his request to play this season instead of sitting out a year.

"It was a scary and anxious time," Sean Patterson recalled. "I think going through what he did made him a tougher and stronger person and it makes him appreciate every moment with the winged helmet even more."

With the help of attorney Tom Mars, the appeal was won for Patterson — and the Wolverines.

"The best part of the experience for me was getting to know Shea and his family," Mars wrote in a text message. "And, then watching what Shea's accomplished with his teammates this season — a game after game. I haven't missed any of them, and I'll be in the stands in Columbus on Saturday."

Patterson, a former five-star recruit from Toledo, Ohio, decided to transfer from Ole Miss after the NCAA penalized the football program with sanctions for rules violations under former coach Hugh Freeze. The penalties included a bowl ban for the 2018 season. Patterson and other players argued they were misled during their recruitment by Ole Miss coaches and staffers about the nature of the NCAA's investigation.

Patterson insisted he doesn't think much about the appeal process these days, but acknowledged being thankful to win it.

"Just was so fortunate to get this opportunity to play for the team," he said.

Harbaugh was fortunate, too. In his fourth year in charge of college football's winningest team, he desperately needed a difference-making quarterback for a change.

Patterson has delivered. He is one of five finalists for the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award and may be mentioned as a Heisman Trophy candidate if he can help Michigan beat Ohio State for just the second time in 15 years.

Patterson has completed 66 percent of his passes for 2,177 yards with 18 touchdowns and just four interceptions. He can throw from the pocket or on the move, running the play called or one he improvises.

"I can't say we rehearsed some of the things that come about in a game, especially the times when you see him scramble and make that throw across the body and across the field," said Pep Hamilton, Michigan's assistant head coach. "I pretty much cringe every time that happens, but he seems to come out on the right side of it."

Patterson has run for 255 yards and two scores, keeping the ball after faking handoffs in read-option plays that have become increasingly more effective.

"You need him to make a play, he makes it," Harbaugh said. "Whether it's throwing or running or not turning a bad play into a worse play. He's got a great feel, talent and energy for the game. Love his focus. Love his intensity."

Harbaugh has said Patterson will be an NFL quarterback. A report suggested Patterson is expected to enter the NFL Draft after the season instead of staying in school for his senior season and then being part of a stronger class of NFL hopefuls.

"That's completely false," Sean Patterson told The Associated Press. "We have not spoken about him entering the draft at all. And when Shea does make the decision that is best for him, it won't have anything to do with the competition because he's never been afraid of that. The only thing he's focused on competing for right now is a Big Ten championship."

And if Patterson's parents didn't pull their son away from Schembechler Hall on Tuesday night for a few hours, there is a good chance he would've been watching more film.

"He's a guy who is a film junkie," Hamilton said. "He loves watching film."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Future: Meyer insists he has no plans to leave Ohio State

FROM BACK PAGE

Columbus, was tumultuous bordering on absurd even before the first game kicked off on Sept. 1.

Meyer weathered a scandal involving a now-fired assistant coach that led to his suspension for the first three games and a series of public apologies and explanations. He has had a flareup of the arachnoid cyst in his head that causes debilitating headaches, one of which dropped him to a knee during a game on Oct. 6.

He lost star defensive end Nick Bosa to an early season-ending injury, and the Buckeyes' defense never fully recovered. The problems led to a shocking blowout by unranked Purdue on Oct. 20 that pushed Ohio State to the fringe of the playoff picture. Other injuries have been a plague all year.

Just last week, Meyer had to stop preparations for the Maryland game and address another off-the-field issue, this one involving a report that a former player left the program because of bad treatment. Everyone at the university issued denials, but Meyer had to talk to the team and the media about it while trying to keep it from becoming a distraction.

"All that stuff is foolishness," insisted Ryan Day, the co-offensive coordinator who ran the show during Meyer's suspension. "This team right here knows what a great person coach Meyer is, and the rest of that stuff we're not even focused on. There have been a lot of things that have been said this year, and it hasn't bothered this team."

It is safe to say that nothing has personally hurt Meyer more in his career than people saying his lax treatment of now-fired assistant coach Zach Smith made him culpable in the domestic abuse allegedly suffered by Smith's ex-wife. Meyer said he knew about the accusations against Zach Smith — grandson of former Ohio State coach Earle Bruce — but wasn't sure they were true and kept Smith on his staff because no criminal charges were filed. The university cited that lapse when it suspended Meyer.

A chronic worrier and control

freak, Meyer had lost control of certain things in his world and, by all accounts, that knocked him off-kilter. His wife, Shelley, a psychiatric nurse, pulled the curtain back recently when she responded to a Twitter user who was inquiring about Urban's "most difficult personality trait."

"[I] think he would be ok if I said his 'control/perfection' issues are the most difficult to deal with — as we know LOGICALLY, a person can't control everything, and being perfect is REALLY hard when [you] can't control ALL," she wrote.

Meyer won two of his three national championships at Florida but retired twice because of stress-related poor health, leading to chatter recently that he might be close again to doing something else. He already has experience as an ESPN broadcaster. He's a grandfather now, and he and Shelley are empty-nesters. He will make \$7.6 million this year, with a contract that runs through 2022.

There have been reports that the 39-year-old Day — who moved from the press box to the sideline with Meyer this season — is being groomed as the coach-in-waiting, although Ohio State has denied it.

Meyer, who acknowledged depression and anxiety issues late in his six-year tenure at Florida, said he is not close to giving it all up. He told reporters recently he plans to be Ohio State's coach for "as long as I can," without saying exactly what that means. As long as his health will allow it? Until he starts losing?

Until he's no longer having fun?

Winning, of course, makes everything better. Meyer has done a lot of it and is paid handsomely. He is 80-9 at Ohio State. He has beaten Michigan every year he's been here and few would be all that surprised if the Buckeyes manage to do it again Saturday at Ohio Stadium.

Meyer also insists he's fine and is enjoying himself — as long as the Buckeyes win.

"Believe it or not," he said, "I'm a halfway fun guy sometimes."



Nick Wass/AP

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer holds his hands to his head during Saturday's game against Maryland in College Park, Md.



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Washington State quarterback Gardner Minshew, left, recently decided to spend this season at Alabama, where he likely would have backed up Tua Tagovailoa the entire year. Minshew instead chose Washington State and has emerged as one of Tagovailoa's top competitors for the Heisman Trophy.

Rivalry week

Teams still jockeying for playoff position as regular season ends

BY STEVE MCGARGEE
Associated Press

Rivalry week should help sort out the College Football Playoff picture while finalizing the conference championship game matchups.

No. 3 Notre Dame (No. 3 CFP) can pretty much wrap up one of the four playoff spots Saturday by winning at Southern California. No. 4 Michigan (No. 4 CFP) seeks to remain in playoff position Saturday when it visits No. 10 Ohio State (No. 10 CFP), with the winner facing No. 20 Northwestern (No. 19 CFP) next week in the Big Ten championship game.

No. 7 Washington State (No. 8) also still harbors playoff hopes as it prepares to host No. 16 Washington (No. 16 CFP) on Friday, with the winner facing No. 18 Utah (No. 17 CFP) in the Pac-12 championship game.

The Oklahoma-West Virginia and Texas-Kansas games on Friday will determine the representatives in the Big 12 championship game. If No. 11 Texas (No. 14 CFP) beats Kansas, the Longhorns will face the Oklahoma-West Virginia winner for the Big 12 title. If Kansas upsets Texas, No. 6 Oklahoma (No. 6 CFP) and No. 12 West Virginia (No. 13) would meet for a second straight week in the Big 12 championship game.

Here are some other things to keep heading into the final week of college football's regular season:

Best game

Michigan at Ohio State: Michigan has lost to Ohio State each of the last six seasons but heads into this year's game as a four-point favorite.

Ohio State (10-1, 7-1 Big Ten) has looked more vulnerable than its record suggests, as the Buckeyes got trounced 49-20 by

By the numbers

5

The number of touchdown runs allowed by No. 1 Alabama (No. 1 CFP) this season, the lowest total given up by any FBS team.

22

Fresno State hasn't allowed any of its last 22 opponents to reach the 30-point mark, the longest streak of any FBS team.

36

Straight seasons that FSU has played in a bowl game. The Seminoles can become bowl-eligible with a win Saturday.

SOURCE: Associated Press

Purdue last month and eked out a 52-51 overtime victory over Maryland last week. Michigan (10-1, 8-0) has won 10 straight since a season-opening 24-17 loss at Notre Dame.

Michigan leads all Football Bowl Subdivision teams in total defense, while Ohio State ranks second in total offense.

Heisman watch

Gardner Minshew, Washington State: Minshew nearly decided to spend this season at Alabama, where he almost certainly would have backed up Tua Tagovailoa the entire year. The East Carolina graduate transfer instead chose Washington State and has emerged as one of Tagovailoa's top competitors for the Heisman Trophy.

After throwing for seven touchdowns last week in a 69-28 blowout of Arizona, Minshew leads all FBS players in yards passing (4,325) and is tied for the lead in touchdown passes (36). Tagovailoa ranks first in passing efficiency.

Minshew faces perhaps his

toughest test of the season this week as Washington State hosts Washington, which leads the Pac-12 in scoring defense and ranks second in the league in total defense.

Heisman Trophy voters also should keep an eye on the quarterback matchup in the Oklahoma-West Virginia game with Kyler Murray leading the Sooners and Will Grier taking snaps for the Mountaineers.

Hot seat watch

Clay Helton, Southern California: With angry USC fans chanting for Helton's firing, the Trojans fell 34-27 to UCLA last week for their fourth loss in five games.

Ranked 15th at the start of the season, USC (5-6) now must upset Notre Dame on Saturday just to become bowl eligible and avoid its first seven-loss regular season since 2000.

Helton owns a 32-16 record at USC and led the Trojans to a Rose Bowl title two seasons ago. His contract was extended through the 2023 season earlier this year.

NFL

Defense links these Ravens to past glory

By DAVID GINSBURG
Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — During an NFL season in which wild, high-scoring games have become increasingly commonplace, one constant from the past remains unchanged: The Baltimore Ravens own the best defense in the league.

Ever since Ray Lewis anchored the middle of a record-breaking defense that carried the Ravens to a Super Bowl win in 2000, Baltimore has prided itself in playing rugged, relentless and in-your-face defense.

This year is no exception. The Ravens rank first in the NFL in total defense (300 yards per game) and fewest points allowed (18.1). While these numbers don't necessary stack up well against the 2000 team that surrendered only 247.9 yards and 10.3 points per game, the current unit can point to that 54-51 game between the Rams and Chiefs last Monday as proof that this year is unlike any other.

So, being known as the top-ranked defense still carries some weight in Baltimore.

"It's on our minds. It's one of the goals we set out to do," safety Eric Weddle said Wednesday. "We pride ourselves in how we work to try to end up being the No. 1 defense. So now we've got six weeks to continue to prove ourselves being one of the best."

Despite the play of the defense, Baltimore (5-5) is scrambling to end a three-year playoff drought. The Ravens limited Cincinnati to 255 yards last week in a 24-21 victory, and they'll seek to build on that Sunday against the Oakland



Ravens C.J. Mosley, left, and Tony Jefferson tackle Panthers running back Christian McCaffrey. Ever since Ray Lewis manned the middle of a record-breaking defense that carried the Ravens to a Super Bowl win in 2000, Baltimore has prided itself in playing rugged, relentless and in-your-face defense. This year is no exception.

Raiders (2-8).

"I really like the way they play," Raiders coach Jon Gruden said. "They have multiple fronts, multiple pressures and multiple coverages. And they have a lot of really good players."

Baltimore currently ranks third against the run, second against the pass and fourth in third-down efficiency at 36 percent.

"We stop the run most of the time and we cover tight most of

'We pride ourselves in how we work to try to end up being the No. 1 defense.'

Eric Weddle
Ravens safety

the time. We keep pressure on quarterbacks most of the time," coach John Harbaugh said. "We do a good job of getting off the field, all in all."

What more could a coach ask? "One of the biggest things is turnovers. That's something we focus on," Harbaugh said. "And we want to stop people in the red

zone. Those are two areas we've been great at in the past."

This year, not so much. The Ravens have only five interceptions and two fumble recoveries, which leaves them with a minus-5 turnover differential. And opponents have scored touchdowns on 63 percent of their trips inside the 20.

"When those things start coming along, and if we continue to play at a high level in all the other areas, it's got the making of being a special defense," Weddle said.

Baltimore's defense works because first-year coordinator Don Martindale has been calling the right schemes for a unit that has strength on the line, in the middle and at the back end. Brandon Williams clogs the middle for linebackers C.J. Mosley and Terrell Suggs, and there's depth at cornerback with Brandon Carr, Marlon Humphrey, Tavon Young and Jimmy Smith.

"Guys on the front stop the run let our linebackers run, and we have guys that are able to cover," Weddle said. "This is the most veteran cornerback group that we've had here in a long time. It makes it fun. It's easy for us safety guys. We just run around and help out the guys."

The key is that everyone knows their role and follows it.

"One of the things you have to do to be a top defense is communication," Mosley said. "If you have guys in the wrong spot, it won't work out."

That's not been an issue for a defense that brought Lewis to his feet last week in the owner's box.

"We've done a lot of good things," Martindale said. "Let's wait until after the season is over to see where we stand."

Chargers' Gordon making his case as a top RB

By JOE REEDY
Associated Press

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Melvin Gordon of the Chargers is quietly stating his case that there is more than one elite all-purpose running back in Los Angeles.

Even though the Rams' Todd Gurley has commanded most of the attention when it comes to discussing the league's top runners, Gordon is showing that he should be in that conversation as well.

Going into Sunday's game against Arizona, the fourth-year back has six straight games where he has had 120 yards or more from scrimmage. He is averaging 132.1 yards from scrimmage per game, which is second to Gurley. He is also averaging 6.4 yards per touch, which is fourth, while Gurley is averaging 5.9 yards, which is tied for sixth.

Gordon has 42 receptions and is on track to surpass last year's career high of 58. The increased receptions are fine with Gordon as long as he gets the ball.

"Coach (Anthony) Lynn especially told me this year, 'Don't really focus on the carries. Let's



Chargers tight end Antonio Gates, middle, celebrates with Mike Williams and Melvin Gordon, right, after scoring against the Broncos. Gordon is showing this season that he should be in the conversation as the league's best running back.

just worry about the touches.' He made that big this year," Gordon said. "I knew when I heard that, it's just an opportunity for me — whether it's catching or running (the ball). As long as I'm getting

the opportunity, I can take that."

When Gordon has caught the ball out of the backfield, he has made the most of it. He is the only back in the league that has more than 40 receptions and 100 rush-

ing attempts to average over 10.5 (10.7) yards per catch. He is also tied for second in the league with four catches of 25 or more yards.

The receptions have also taken less of a toll on Gordon's body instead of running between the tackles 20-25 times a game.

"It can definitely help keep a back fresh, but their touches are just like carries to him. Check-downs, swing passes, those are just extended runs. We're doing a good job of finding him in those situations," Lynn said.

Gordon missed the Week 7 game against Tennessee because of a hamstring injury, but says he feels good for this point of the season.

"I'm just trying to lift heavy on the legs still and trying to get my extra conditioning in when I can," he said. "I'm banged up like everybody else. I have little nicks here and there. I'll probably be good on Saturday. I'll probably be back to where I need to be and then, obviously, the next day you're back at war."

When Gordon has carried the ball, he's still been one of the tougher backs to take down. Ac-

cording to SportRadar, Gordon is fourth in rushing yards after contact (399) and second in broken tackles with 27.

Gordon could have a prime opportunity for his fourth 100-yard rushing game of the season on Sunday. Arizona (2-8) comes into the game with the fourth-worst run defense in the league.

Cardinals coach Steve Wilks faced Gurley in Week 2 and said that both Gordon and Gurley are similar backs.

"I say similar because they both are what I consider very potent receivers out of the backfield," Wilks said. "You know they can move them around well out of space as well as making you miss and have the capability to take it all the way."

Wilks said Gordon does take less hits when catching more than compared to running the ball.

"Yeah, you take the run between the tackles, and you're still going to get hits. Last week he didn't get hits because he ran for 50, 60 yards, whatever it was. It takes less off your body, the pounding between the tackles, yes, it does in that way."

NFL

Colts' improved defense plays pivotal role



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Indianapolis Colts cornerback Quincy Wilson (31) celebrates after making an interception.

By MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis Colts made a firm commitment to Matt Eberflus in January.

They stuck to it after the man who initially hired Eberflus to be Indy's defensive coordinator, Josh McDaniels, reneged on a deal to become the next coach and they lived up to their promise after eventually hiring Frank Reich in February.

It's worked out well for the Colts.

"He's a consistent guy, he's got a consistent message every day and he believes in the system," middle linebacker Anthony Walker said Tuesday. "That's what you want as a player, a guy who believes in the system."

The system looks awfully familiar to longtime Colts' fans.

Eberflus reinstalled the Tampa 2 defense, the zone concept popularized by Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy. General manager Chris Ballard saw it work in Chicago under Lovie Smith, one of Dungy's former pupils, and Reich worked with it on Dungy's staff when he first started coaching in 2006. Indy capped that season by winning the Super Bowl.

The low-key personalities and focused approaches also proved a perfect match.

But the real investment came in free agency and the draft.

While Colts fans waited impatiently for Ballard to make a splashy move, he mostly avoided

'We are getting to the ball, causing turnovers.'

Darius Leonard
Colts linebacker

the high-priced free agents and instead went with less-familiar names who could excel in Eberflus' system.

Linebacker Darius Leonard, a second-round pick, has a league-high 104 tackles and Walker has 67 tackles, nearly four times as many as he had in 2017.

Defensive end Kemoko Turay has shown flashes of being a disruptive pass rusher and Tyquan Lewis showed promise in his first two games after missing the first eight with an injured toe. Both were second-round draft picks in April.

"We're getting to the ball, causing turnovers," Leonard said. "We don't do a lot, there's not a lot of thinking so it's very easy for me to go out and play."

After finishing 30th in the league in yards allowed per game in 2016 and 2017 and 26th or worse in four of Chuck Pagano's six seasons as head coach, Indy has jumped to No. 20 this season. Through 10 games, they have 26 sacks and are on pace for their highest total since 2013.

The Colts have allowed 17.5 points to their past four opponents and only four teams have more takeaways than Indy (19).

Seahawks receivers lead NFL in creative celebrations

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — The conversation takes place throughout the week inside the Seattle Seahawks training facility. A group of four or five throwing out suggestions and discussing whether their idea can actually be executed.

By the time Friday rolls around, a final decision has been made and the group spends part of the day seeing if they can pull off the plan successfully if the opportunity presents itself on game day.

"They're actually a group effort. We all put our two cents in and come up with something," Seattle wide receiver David Moore said. "(We'll) come up with something. 'Hey we can throw this in, maybe this will look good,' and then there you go."

The talk isn't about a play or scheme. Instead, it's about what has become a must-see event anytime the Seahawks wide receivers find the end zone. Their touchdown celebrations have drawn attention around the NFL and set a standard they're trying to top each week.

"At first, it was all just about having fun, right? ... It has become an expectation," wide receiver Doug Baldwin said. "Now everybody's



ELAINE THOMPSON/AP

Seattle Seahawks wide receiver Doug Baldwin (89) takes part in a touchdown celebration with Tyler Lockett, left, and Nick Vannett, right, after Baldwin caught a pass for a touchdown against the Green Bay Packers during the first half of an game last Thursday.

asking us what's coming up next, but to first and foremost, we've got to score so let's take care of the football aspect of it first and then just have fun if it comes along."

The group of receivers — Baldwin, Moore, Jaron Brown and Tyler Lockett primarily — may

not come close to leading the league in catches because of Seattle's run-first offense. But when any of the four find the end zone, getting past the goal line is just the beginning.

It started in London when the Seahawks beat Oakland and

Brown caught a touchdown on Seattle's opening drive. Brown at first briefly celebrated by himself before being joined by Baldwin, Lockett and Moore with an ode to "Drumline" and a fight scene from the movie that was released in 2002.

Two weeks later after Lockett caught a TD in Detroit, it was an ode to baseball, the World Series and Nolan Ryan when Baldwin, the hitter, charged Lockett, the pitcher, and was knocked out in the process.

Against the Chargers, it was "The Four Heartbeats," which was a tribute to the 1991 movie "The Five Heartbeats." Each wide receiver showed off a bit of his dance moves and Brown — who caught the touchdown — ended up getting the "featured" role at the end of the routine. It's the celebration most say was the best.

"I told them from the jump, 'Yeah that's not going to work.' Because you have to be on beat with that and you all aren't going to hear each other," running back Mike Davis said. "It actually looked good. I was surprised by that."

And last week in the victory over the Packers, tight end Nick Vannett was added to the mix

following Baldwin's TD catch. The celebration this time: "Swag Surfin'."

"I don't think it went as well as we wanted it to," Baldwin said.

There was supposed to be one more celebration thrown into the recent mix, but as Baldwin said, "Tyler screwed it up." After Lockett's 23-yard touchdown reception against the Los Angeles Rams on Nov. 11, there was supposed to be another group performance. But before everyone could gather, Lockett handed the ball to boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr., who was in an end zone suite.

That celebration was supposed to be specific to the Rams game and was not carried over to the following week. It's another sign of how serious and how much fun this group is having.

And no, it's not taking away from their preparation for what's important — the actual game — including this week's matchup against Carolina that has major NFC playoff implications.

"It's minutes, but obviously you guys know when we focus in on something, we get focused in on something so it doesn't take us too long to get it down," Baldwin said.



GAMEDAY

WEEK 12

TELEVISED GAMES


**New England Patriots (7-3)
at New York Jets (3-7)**

AFN-Sports

7 p.m. Sunday CET

3 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Patriots lead 61-53-1.

Last meeting: Patriots beat Jets 26-6, Dec. 31, 2017.

Notes: Patriots have won past four meetings. ... Patriots QB Tom Brady has won seven of his past eight starts against the Jets. ... Jets rookie Sam Darnold has six TD passes in his past three home games. ... Jets RB Isaiah Crowell has 409 scrimmage yards in five home games.


**Arizona Cardinals (2-8)
at Los Angeles Chargers (7-3)**

AFN-Sports2

10 p.m. Sunday CET

6 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Chargers lead 9-4.

Last meeting: Cardinals beat Chargers 18-17, Sept. 9, 2014.

Notes: Chargers have won three of past four meetings. ... Cardinals rookie QB Josh Rosen threw a career-high three TD passes last week. ... Cardinals RB David Johnson had 154 scrimmage yards last week. ... Chargers RB Melvin Gordon had 156 scrimmage yards last week. ... Chargers WR Keenan Allen had nine catches last week.

Marquee matchup

Seattle Seahawks (5-5) at Carolina Panthers (6-4)

AFN-Sports2, 7 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT

SERIES RECORD: Seahawks lead 6-3.

LAST MEETING: Seahawks beat Panthers 40-7, Dec. 4, 2016.

LAST WEEK: Seahawks beat Packers 27-24; Lions beat Panthers 20-19.

SEAHAWKS OFFENSE: OVERALL (20), RUSH (1), PASS (27).

SEAHAWKS DEFENSE: OVERALL (11), RUSH (17), PASS (11).

PANTHERS OFFENSE: OVERALL (15), RUSH (7), PASS (22).

PANTHERS DEFENSE: OVERALL (13), RUSH (8), PASS (11).

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES: Seahawks have won five of past six meetings. ... Seahawks coach Pete Carroll is 5-1 in his career against the Panthers. Panthers coach Ron Rivera is 1-4. ... Seahawks QB Russell Wilson has passed for 2,192 yards and 23 TDs this season with five interceptions for a 110.2 rating. He has 26 TD passes in the fourth quarter since 2017, the most in the NFL over that span. ... Seahawks lead the NFL in

rushing, averaging 154.3 yards per game. ... Seahawks RB Chris Carson had 83 rushing yards and a TD in Week 11, and has a rushing TD in two of his past three games. ... Seahawks WR Tyler Lockett led teams with 71 receiving yards in Week 11. Had career-long 75-yard rushing TD, his only career TD run, in last meeting. ... Seahawks DE Frank Clark had two sacks last week and has seven sacks, two forced fumbles and a fumble recovery in his past five games. ... Seahawks LB Bobby Wagner has 45 tackles and a sack in five career meetings with the Panthers. ... Panthers QB Cam Newton has passed for 2,443 yards and 20 TDs with six interceptions this season for a 102.7 rating. He passed for 357 yards and three TDs last week and has two or more TD passes in nine consecutive games. ... Panthers RB Christian McCaffrey had 110 scrimmage yards (57 receiving, 53 rushing) last week and has 500 scrimmage yards and five TDs in his past four home games. ... Panthers TE Greg Olsen has 16 catches for 236 yards and two TDs in his past three games against the Seahawks. ... Panthers DE Mario Addison has 7 1/2 sacks and three forced fumbles in his past eight home games.

— Associated Press


**Pittsburgh Steelers (7-2-1)
at Denver Broncos (4-6)**

AFN-Sports

10:25 p.m. Sunday CET

6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Broncos lead 14-8-1.

Last meeting: Steelers beat Broncos 34-27, Dec. 20, 2015.

Notes: Steelers have won two of past three meetings. ... Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger passed for 314 yards and two TDs last week and rushed for the game-winning TD with five seconds remaining. ... Broncos rookie RB Phillip Lindsay had 106 scrimmage yards and two rushing TDs last week.


**Green Bay Packers (4-5-1)
at Minnesota Vikings (5-4-1)**

AFN-Sports

2 a.m. Monday CET

10 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Packers lead 59-52-3.

Last meeting: The teams tied 29-29, Sept. 16, 2018.

Notes: Vikings have won two of the past three meetings. ... WR Davante Adams had 10 receptions for a career-high 166 yards last week. ... Vikings QB Kirk Cousins completed 35 of 48 passes last week for 425 yards and four TDs. ... Vikings RB Latavius Murray has rushing TDs in four of his past five games.

**Seahawks quarterback
Russell Wilson**
STEPHEN BRASHEAR/AP

Game capsules compiled from nflmedia.com

Also on AFN:
Cleveland Browns (3-6-1) at Cincinnati Bengals (5-5), AFN-Atlantic, 7 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT

EXPANDED STANDINGS

American Conference

	W	L	T	Pct	East				AFC	NFC	Div
					PA	MA	Home	Away			
New England	7	3	0	.700	280	236	5-0-0	2-3-0	5-2-0	2-1-0	2-0-0
Miami	5	5	0	.500	199	256	4-1-0	1-4-0	4-3-0	1-2-0	2-1-0
Buffalo	3	7	0	.300	137	251	1-3-0	2-4-0	2-5-0	1-2-0	1-1-0
N.Y. Jets	3	7	0	.300	208	254	2-3-0	1-4-0	2-5-0	1-2-0	0-3-0
South											
Houston	7	3	0	.700	230	205	3-1-0	4-2-0	5-2-0	2-1-0	2-1-0
Indianapolis	5	5	0	.500	298	249	3-2-0	2-3-0	4-4-0	1-1-0	2-1-0
Tennessee	5	5	0	.500	178	189	3-1-0	2-4-0	3-5-0	2-0-0	2-1-0
Jacksonville	3	7	0	.300	176	219	2-4-0	1-3-0	2-5-0	1-2-0	0-3-0
North											
Pittsburgh	7	2	1	.750	299	225	3-2-0	4-0-1	4-2-1	3-0-0	3-1-1
Baltimore	5	5	0	.500	237	181	3-2-0	2-3-0	5-3-0	0-2-0	2-3-0
Cincinnati	5	5	0	.500	256	312	3-2-0	2-3-0	3-3-0	2-2-0	1-2-0
Cleveland	3	6	1	.350	218	263	2-3-1	0-4-0	2-4-1	1-2-0	1-1-0
West											
Kansas City	9	2	0	.818	404	294	5-0-0	4-2-0	7-1-0	2-1-0	3-0-0
L.A. Chargers	7	3	0	.700	262	209	3-2-0	4-1-0	5-2-0	2-1-0	2-2-0
Denver	4	6	0	.400	228	235	2-3-0	2-3-0	2-5-0	2-1-0	2-2-0
Oakland	2	8	0	.200	170	293	1-4-0	1-4-0	1-5-0	1-3-0	0-3-0

National Conference

	W	L	T	Pct	East				AFC	NFC	Div
					PA	MA	Home	Away			
Washington	6	4	0	.600	297	198	3-3-0	3-1-0	6-2-0	0-2-0	2-0-0
Dallas	5	5	0	.500	203	190	3-1-0	2-4-0	4-3-0	1-2-0	2-1-0
Philadelphia	4	6	0	.400	205	231	2-3-0	2-3-0	2-5-0	2-1-0	1-1-0
N.Y. Giants	3	7	0	.300	215	263	1-4-0	2-3-0	2-6-0	1-1-0	0-3-0
South											
New Orleans	9	1	0	.900	378	239	4-1-0	5-0-0	6-1-0	3-0-0	1-1-0
Carolina	6	4	0	.600	260	252	5-0-0	1-4-0	4-3-0	2-1-0	1-1-0
Atlanta	4	6	0	.400	263	276	3-3-0	1-3-0	4-3-0	0-3-0	2-1-0
Tampa Bay	3	7	0	.300	267	329	2-2-0	1-5-0	2-5-0	1-2-0	1-2-0
North											
Chicago	7	3	0	.700	294	195	5-1-0	2-2-0	5-1-0	2-2-0	2-1-0
Minnesota	5	4	1	.550	241	229	3-2-0	2-2-1	4-3-1	1-1-0	1-1-1
Green Bay	4	5	1	.450	247	243	4-0-1	0-5-0	2-4-1	2-1-0	1-1-1
Detroit	4	6	0	.400	222	263	3-2-0	1-4-0	2-5-0	2-1-0	1-2-0
West											
L.A. Rams	10	1	0	.909	389	282	6-0-0	4-1-0	6-1-0	4-0-0	4-0-0
Seattle	5	5	0	.500	246	216	2-2-0	3-3-0	4-3-0	1-2-0	1-2-0
Arizona	2	8	0	.200	145	248	1-5-0	1-3-0	2-5-0	0-3-0	2-2-0
San Francisco	2	8	0	.200	230	266	2-3-0	0-5-0	1-6-0	1-2-0	0-3-0

REST OF THE SCHEDULE

Jacksonville at Buffalo
San Francisco at Tampa Bay
Oakland at Baltimore
N.Y. Giants at Philadelphia
Miami at Indianapolis
Open: L.A. Rams, Kansas City
Monday's game
Tennessee at Houston

NEXT WEEK

Thursday, Nov. 29
New Orleans at Dallas
Sunday, Dec. 2
L.A. Rams at Detroit
Carolina at Tampa Bay
Arizona at Green Bay
Denver at Cincinnati
Chicago at N.Y. Giants
Cleveland at Houston
Indianapolis at Jacksonville
Buffalo at Miami
N.Y. Jets at Tennessee
Kansas City at Oakland
San Francisco at Seattle
Minnesota at New England
L.A. Chargers at Pittsburgh
Monday, Dec. 3
Washington at Philadelphia

SPORTS



Purple curtain

Ravens' top-ranked defense recalls days of old » Page 61

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Beleaguered Buckeye

Health woes raise speculation about future of Ohio St. coach Meyer

By MITCH STACY
Associated Press

URBAN Meyer doesn't seem to be having much fun these days.

The Ohio State coach is not demonstrably mirthful, of course, at least not when it comes to his job.

"It's not like me to be the Joe Positive guy," he acknowledged

the other day. "I'm usually the opposite."

But the 54-year-old Meyer's sideline demeanor has taken on a decidedly beleaguered stoop this season. The usual shouting and gesticulating, the ripping off of his headset, those are often followed by a hand moving up to the

left side of his head because of severe headaches.

Just last week, TV cameras captured his pained reactions as his team slogged through a mistake-filled overtime victory over Maryland, adding to the speculation that health problems could lead to his early

retirement — something he has repeatedly denied.

On the eve of the biggest game of the year, No. 10 Ohio State's showdown with No. 4 Michigan this weekend, it is easy enough to wonder if Meyer is still suffering through one of the more difficult stretches of his storied career.

This season, his seventh in

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Ohio State's Urban Meyer doesn't seem to be having much fun these days. Meyer's sideline demeanor has taken on a decidedly beleaguered stoop this season, leading to speculation about the 54-year-old coach's future.

Nick Wass/AP

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